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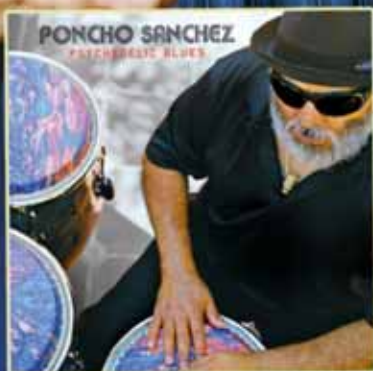
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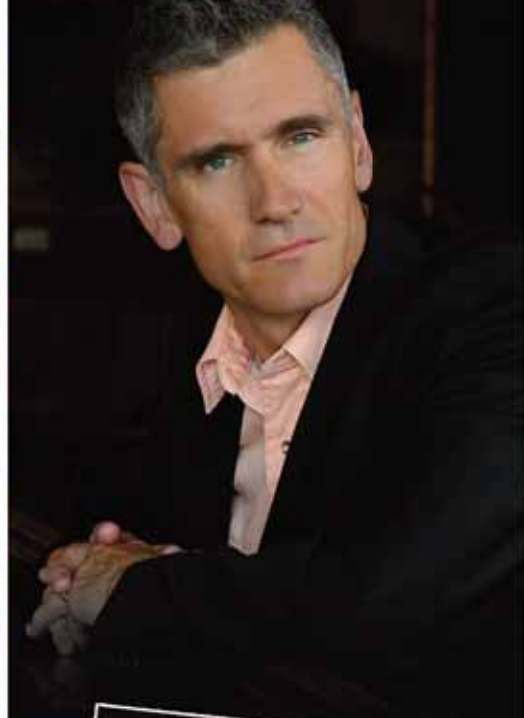
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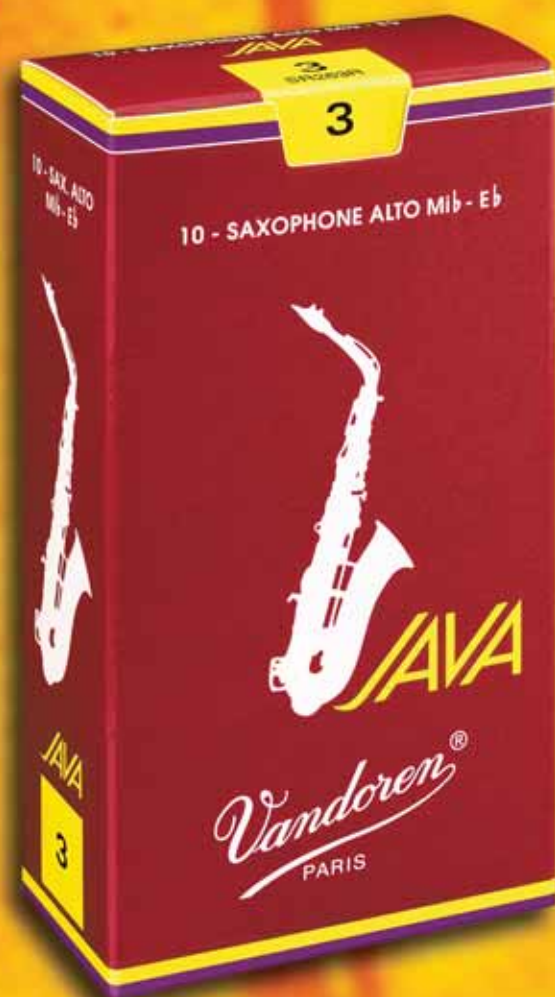
 
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CLAY WALKER
Freddy Cole

DOWNBEAT U DRUM SCHOOL

26 Jeff “Tain” Watts/Lewis Nash/Matt Wilson *Follow The Leaders* // By Ken Micallef

The history of jazz drummers as leaders is illustrious if not particularly long-lived. Often relegated to “drummer only” or “non-musician” status by ignorant fellow musicians, jazz drummers have conquered the odds to create music easily on par with that of any instrumentalist. This summer, DownBeat invited three of today’s premier drummer/leader practitioners to discuss their art, their drumming and their place in the lineage of the legends who preceded them.

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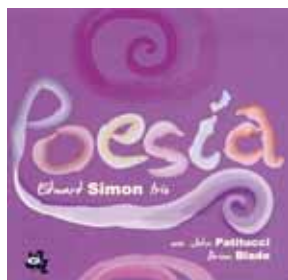
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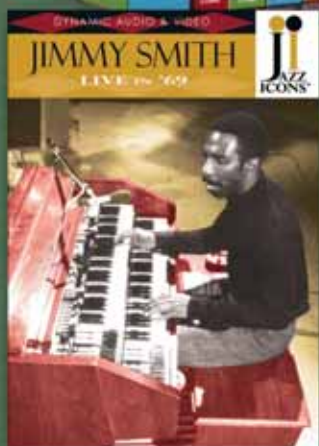
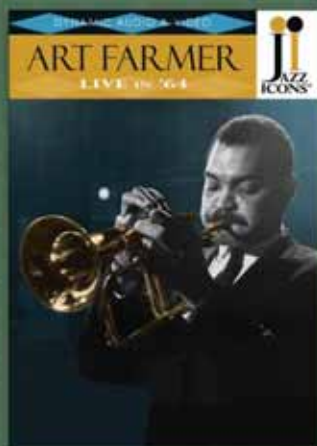
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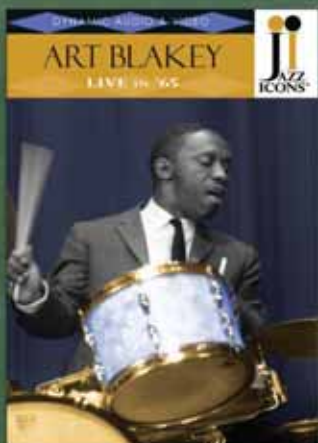
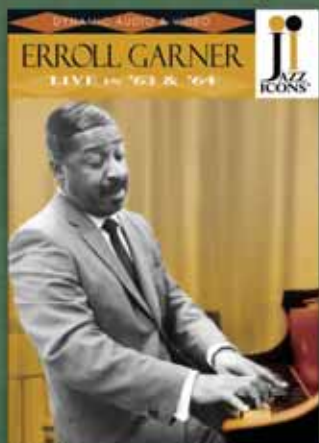
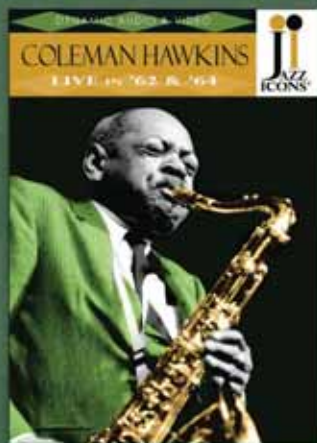


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Jeff “Tain” Watts, Lewis Nash and Matt Wilson: an atmosphere of camaraderie

JIMMY KATZ

Drummers With Vision

My friend Gilbert was a drummer with a vision: to lead his very own big band, *his* way. He invited me to join his group at its onset, during the summer of 1981. I accepted, mostly because of my fondness for him, and partly out of my enthusiasm for playing saxophone. I was only 14 at the time, but that decision has had a profound effect on me and the course my life has taken ever since.

Gilbert rushed the beat like nobody’s business—partly out of youthful inexperience, but mostly out of genuine enthusiasm. And he didn’t exactly have what you’d call straightahead jazz chops. But that didn’t matter to us. He held it together. He held *us* together. He led a great band and he treated and paid everybody fairly. Gil made it fun. And he always sprung for beer—even though we were all well underage, even when we broke *his* rules and fought among ourselves and made the music feel like work.

It was because of Gilbert that cats wanted to play, and stay, in the Outcasts.

Gilbert was an orchestrator on a grand scale. No arranger or composer of music—he couldn’t even sing—he was a true leader who brought together friends from each side of the tracks for more than just gigs, but also matches of four-square, Euchre and football, not to mention rebelling against authority and subverting established social norms. There was a good reason why he named us the Outcasts. He loved our quirks and encouraged all of us to wear our individuality proudly.

The Outcasts were, and still are, Gilbert’s band. He died young in 1994, but the band lives on, just as he would have wanted it. His powerful presence, a source of true inspiration, continues to be felt, even in his absence.

Reading over Ken Micallef’s cover story for this issue (see page 26) on drummers Jeff “Tain” Watts, Lewis Nash and Matt Wilson, I’m reminded of Gilbert and his way with an ensemble—not just because he was such a fine drummer-bandleader, but because of the atmosphere of camaraderie he created around him, because of his sheer magnetism. Not long into the article, I started to get a sense of just how fun it must be to hang out with these three ambitious guys, all of whom have their own visions and lead their own bands while managing to keep their egos in check.

Drummers. Too frequently they get a bad rap they don’t deserve. But let’s face it, we need them, and we like being around them. And, in the case of my friend Gilbert, and departed legendary bandleaders such as Art Blakey and Mel Lewis, we sometimes miss them, too.

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Chords & Discords



Philadelphia Gratitude

Thank you for the great article about the Philadelphia Jazz Fair ("The Beat," October). I can't say enough good things about the job that Eric Fine did in researching and writing the piece. It's great to see Jymie Merritt and Trudy Pitts receive some national recognition at this time in their careers. I first subscribed to DownBeat in 1967 as a sophomore in high school. It's still my favorite, and the definitive magazine of record in jazz.

Don Glanden

Division Head, Graduate Jazz Studies

The University of the Arts

Philadelphia

Anderson's Decade Count

It was great to see the article on Fred Anderson (September). However, the writer makes a common error in his lead for the story. Anderson didn't enter his eighth decade on his last birthday; he began the last year of his eighth decade.

The first decade of his (or anyone's) life ended when he completed his 10th year; or when he turned 11. So, following that count, next spring, Fred Anderson will begin his ninth decade on the planet. Here's to wishing that Fred Anderson has many more years, many more decades, as an active musician and presenter.

Herb Levy

herb.levy@sbcglobal.net

A Teddy Wilson Treasure

I love the marvelous interview Tom Scanlan did with Teddy Wilson back in 1959 and hope you continue extracting such precious treasures from the DownBeat archives (September). By the way, when it becomes

time to choose new members for the Hall of Fame I hope someone remembers Red Norvo, a great musician who made enormous contributions to jazz yet somehow seems to be undervalued and overlooked.

Ross Firestone

randgfirestone@nyc.rr.com

Recognizing Pettiford

It has been long overdue for the music industry to openly acknowledge the unequalled genius of Oscar Pettiford and his legacy as one of the masters of American classical music: jazz. Thank you, DownBeat, for addressing this miscue by finally inducting him into the DownBeat Hall of Fame ("Critics Poll," August). Those in the mainstream music industry who profit from the achievements of talented artists have historically ostracized Pettiford from his rightful rank among the jazz masters, primarily because he refused to compromise the integrity of his music for capital gain.

Jacqueline Pettiford

Chicago

Cohn's Off Night

With reference to Edwin Bowers of the Al Cohn Jazz Society ("Chords," September): Cohn may well be deserving of inclusion in the Hall of Fame. But from my viewpoint, he has never come to my full attention except for the one time I saw him in Perth, Australia, in 1986. He must have had an off night because the music was unremarkable, he moaned and groaned and cut the gig short when his instrument started to fall apart (decompose?).

On another matter, it was good to see a Mike Nock recording covered in "Woodshed" (September). Mike spent several years in the United States playing with the likes of Dave Liebman and is now the Grand Master of Australian jazz piano. In whatever format he plays, he is always interesting and entertaining.

Keith Penhallow

Canberra, Australia

Correction

The Student Music Guide (October) printed an incorrect amount for undergraduate tuition at New York University. The correct amount for music students is \$38,765 per year, which includes nonrefundable registration and services fees.

Saxophone professor Michael Cox should have been listed as a faculty member of Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, in the Student Music Guide.

DownBeat regrets the errors.

Have a chord or discord? E-mail us at editor@downbeat.com.

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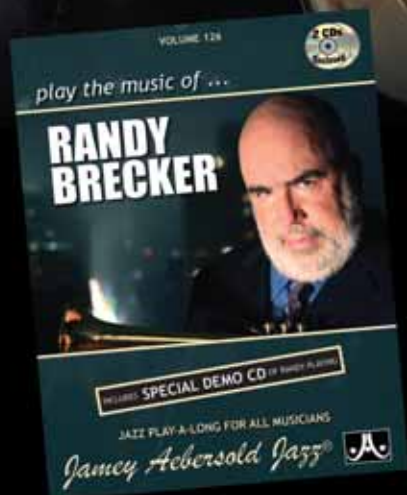
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Cuban Bridge

As U.S.-Cuban relations thaw, musicians discuss what American visitors could experience on the island

It has been several years since most Americans could legally visit Cuba. Now, with Cuban-Americans free to visit their birthplace, speculation is rife that President Barack Obama will soon remove the Treasury Department restrictions that block American travel to the island. While it's too early to determine what barriers could be lifted, the two countries are making tentative steps. This September, the U.S. State Department granted performance visas to Cuban singer Pablo Milanés and composer Zenaida Romeu—the first such visas granted for Cuban musicians since 2003.

Of course, some music has always flowed across borders, with Cuban musicians such as saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba and drummer Dafnis Prieto establishing themselves in the United States, and others like Jane Bunnett and Ry Cooder importing various elements of Cuban music to North America. But what musical riches await discovery by American tourists?

"Some might think the music is like it was 50 years ago," said Prieto, whose work as a drummer and composer has transcended traditional clavé rhythms. "Since that time, it has grown in many different ways, and there are local styles and variations wherever you go."

"Travelers are in for some surprises," said Bunnett, the Toronto-based reed player who has been exploring Cuban music as a tourist and improviser for almost 30 years. "Every region has some musicians who are legends in their own town. It's a situation akin to the early 1960s, when researchers and journalists started discovering blues musicians in the rural South."

One thing that is significantly different from the era when part-time players like Mississippi Fred McDowell and Skip James re-surfaced is



the fact that most of the musicians who remain in Cuba are highly educated and experienced in performing for a variety of audiences.

"People might think the music scene is not as sophisticated as it is," said Roberto Occhipinti, a Canadian bassist who has produced recordings by Cuban ex-pats like Prieto and pianist Hilario Durán. "There's a real strong sense of self among the musicians. Overall, there's a depth to the place that you don't see in many countries. Everyone sings and everyone dances."

"Cuba is a country where music is always there, no matter what happens," said Durán.

Not only is it deeply ingrained in the everyday cultural life of many Cubans, since the Communist revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power, music has been seen as one of the few ways to ease the harsh realities of life on the island. For budding musicians, joining a salsa band can be a ticket out, if only for a carefully monitored tour or a tourist-resort gig.

These days, said Occhipinti, many of the country's jazz musicians are as plugged-in to current trends as their contemporaries outside Cuba. "Today, the young jazz players in Cuba have access to a lot more information; some of them can connect to things through the

Internet, they can hear anything that's going on. They play like they're at the university level in their teens, and they don't have any distractions. There's nothing to get between them and their music."

Drummer Francisco Mela recently returned to his native country after an absence of 10 years. "I was really impressed with what I heard," he said, "particularly among the drummers. I heard a lot of powerful players who have great control of dynamics and strong conceptual ideas. The music is really starting to swing more."

For music tourists new to Cuba, Durán has some recommendations for those wanting to hear the best of what Havana has to offer.

"In the Vedado area, La Zorra y el Cuervo, Café Cantante and the Jazz Café all offer good music, and you can meet the musicians, as well," Durán said. "In Miramar, on the west side of Havana, you can go to Casa de la Musica. In the heart of the city, you can find a very famous place called Callejon de Hamel, where every Saturday they dance and sing rumbas all afternoon."

Bunnett adds two more recommendations, UNIAC—the Cuban Union of Writers and

Riffs



Pérez Signed: Danilo Pérez stopped by the Mack Avenue Records booth along with saxophonist Tia Fuller at the Detroit Jazz Festival over Labor Day Weekend to officially announce his joining the label. His debut Mack Avenue disc is slated for 2010. **Details:** mackavenurecords.com

Williams Celebration: New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center will honor Mary Lou Williams' centennial during the coming months. Events include a Jazz For Young People Concert devoted to her music on Nov. 7, Geri Allen and Geoff Keezer joining the center's orchestra on Nov. 13 and 14 and Williams' manager, Father Peter O'Brien, lecturing about her life in January. **Details:** jalc.org

Brubeck Honored: Dave Brubeck will become a Kennedy Center Honoree at a ceremony on Dec. 6. The gala at the New York cultural institution will be broadcast on CBS on Dec. 29. **Details:** kennedy-center.org

Lofty Sounds: New York radio station WNYC and National Public Radio affiliates will begin airing tapes that were made in photographer and jazz fan W. Eugene Smith's loft during the '50s and '60s. Premiering on Nov. 16, these tapes include rehearsals and unguarded moments featuring Thelonious Monk, Zoot Sims and Jim Hall. **Details:** wnyc.org

Sinatra Vino: Frank Sinatra's estate has released a limited-production Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon called "Come Fly With Me." **Details:** sinatra.com

RIP, Connor: Singer Chris Connor died of cancer in Toms River, N.J., on Aug. 29. She was 81. Known for her cool, low-vibrato style, Connor sang with the Stan Kenton band, before going solo and recording such hits as "All About Ronnie" and "Trust In Me." **DB**

Artists—which features folkloric music, and Club Tropicale, located in a former beer factory.

The saxophonist and her husband, trumpeter Larry Cramer, have also travelled extensively outside Havana since 2000. Among her favorite places are the Teatro Tomas Terry in Cienfuegos, a spectacular Italianate structure built by architect Lino Sanchez Marmol in 1889, and Casa de la Trova in Santiago de Cuba, which features bolero-son on the back patio and professional dancers upstairs.

Santiago's range of traditional musical styles leads Occhipinti to draw an American parallel: "People who visit Cuba for the music have to go to Havana; that's like New York City for musicians. Santiago is like New Orleans in the sense that it's where a lot of the music originated. It's a completely different vibe than anywhere else."

Like New Orleans, Santiago reflects a significant French influence, dating back to an invasion in 1553, and more recently to the wave of Haitian refugees that followed the slave revolt of 1791. Another important center of Haitian influence is the central city of Camagüey, home to a 10-piece a cappella choir called Grupo Vocal Desandann that Bunnett has featured on two recordings. Their close harmony and floating rhythms are substantially different than music usually associated with Cuba.

Bunnett's 2006 recording *Radio Guantánamo* reflected yet another strand of the country's music little heard outside of the island.

"Changüü is the funkier music I've heard

there," she said. "It's highly syncopated and interactive, and the bongos improvise, unlike the congas in most Cuban music."

"Anyone who thinks they know Cuban music, based on what they've heard over the past 20 years, is wrong," said Occhipinti. "People don't realize things like the huge Jamaican influence that exists in central Cuba, for example, or the fact that the Buena Vista Social Club only represents a style that's prevalent in Santiago de Cuba."

Mela believes that American tourists are in for a great time when they are finally allowed to come to Cuba. "Everybody's going to take them to the best places, and it's going to be scary. There are a lot of hungry musicians waiting to show what they've got."

Among the hungry and talented, Durán points to pianists Rolando Luna and Harold Lopez-Nusa, guitarist Jorge Luis Chicoy and drummer Oliver Valdes.

When the borders open, foreign audiences will also be delighted to discover musicians like Giraldo Piloto, a muscular, exuberant drummer in his mid-40s who is reminiscent of Billy Cobham in his Mahavishnu Orchestra years, and, Miguel Maranda, a Jaco Pastorius-influenced bassist who simultaneously plays percussion.

"Cuba is such a deeply cultural place," said Prieto, "that people are going to be able to see musical distinctions wherever they go."

—James Hale

Saxophonist Nathanson Turns On Poetic Muse

Best known for his work with The Jazz Passengers, saxophonist Roy Nathanson has emerged with a book of poems, *Subway Moon* (Buddy's Knife Editions). It coincides with an album of the same name (yellowbird records) with his band Sotto Voce.

"I would alternate from watching people to somehow letting my mind take its own ride," Nathanson said. "I started writing and reading tons of poetry on the subway traveling from Brooklyn to my teaching job in Manhattan, and found that this was the only place I could write. It was a whole other format of improvisation for exploring emotional and philosophical territory—a different way to dance through the edges of my history other than playing my horn."

"Eventually, I had this manuscript," he continued. "Then, some time in 2006 or '07, I got a grant from Chamber Music America to write a full length 'song cycle' around these poems for The Jazz Passengers. Werner Aldinger of enja/yellowbird Records in Munich wanted to put out the CD and said he knew Renate Da Rin,



who had a new small press in Koln that had just published writing by Henry Grimes and William Parker. The company had this great name, Buddy's Knife Editions—for Buddy Bolden—and the plan was to put them both out together."

During the course of his career, Nathanson said he "sort of organically drifted into writing poetry. When I joined The Lounge Lizards I'd been living for years in the East Village and was as much a part of the 'downtown' theater world as the jazz world—and they were totally different. The Passengers was a way of melding these worlds, and the surreal songs/sketches I wrote or appropriated acted as an engine to achieve that end."

—John Ephland



Freedom, Honesty Defined Rashied Ali

Rashied Ali, who helped expand the drummer's role through his polyrhythmic work with John Coltrane and many others since the mid-'60s, died of a heart attack in New York on Aug. 12. He was 76.

"His technique poured from all kinds of places," said bassist Henry Grimes. "Most of the time, it was unbelievable."

While Ali remains best known for stretching far beyond standard jazz swing time on such albums as Coltrane's *Meditations* (where he played alongside Elvin Jones) and *Interstellar Space* (a sax-drums duo), his early years were more straightforward. Born Robert Patterson, he grew up in Philadelphia, studied under Philly Joe Jones, played r&b with singers like Big Maybelle and served in an army band during the Korean War.

In the early '60s, Ali moved to New York and became engrossed in the burgeoning free-jazz scene, performing with Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp and Pharoah Sanders before joining Coltrane in 1965.

After Coltrane's death two years later, Ali spent time in Europe, but returned to New York in the early '70s and started the performance space Ali's Alley in 1973, which remained open for six years. He also formed Survival Records, which continues to release his material.

By the early '90s, Ali began re-examining his work with Coltrane and Ayler through the group Prima Materia.

"The way Rashied would play the drum set came out of the jazz tradition," said Prima Materia saxophonist Allan Chase. "It had a swing, but when he was playing free, there were multiple things going on. It was like looking through a kaleidoscope—broken up, but everything had its integrity."

That integrity included his bandleading, according to Chase.

"He was very funny, mentoring, energetic, not at all shrouded in mystery," Chase said. "Rashied looked us in the eye and could be complimentary, critical. You could tell he was telling the truth."
—Aaron Cohen

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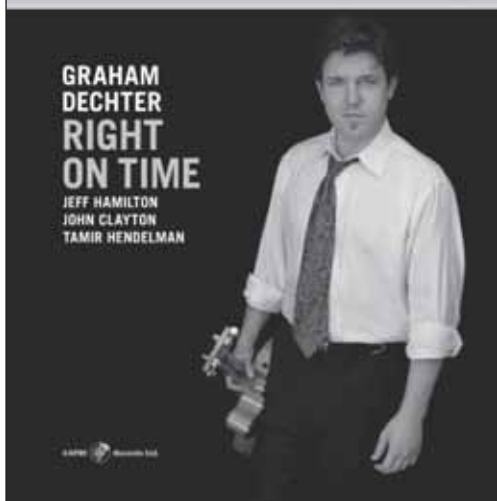
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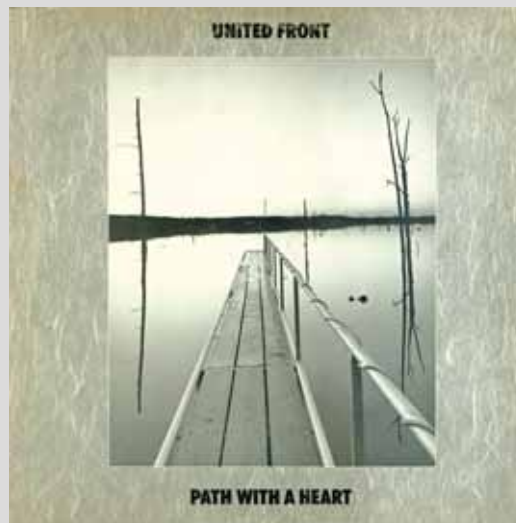


United Front *Path With A Heart*

(RPM RECORDS, 1980)

United Front is usually cited as one of the founding ensembles of the new Asian-American jazz movement in the 1980s. The San Francisco quartet is best known for its work with drummer Anthony Brown, who joined in 1981, but they had already made this great record by then with Carl Hoffman in the percussion role. The rest of the band was as it remained, with bassist Mark Izu, saxophonist Lewis Jordan and trumpeter George Sams. I was a freshman in college, working the graveyard shift at WBRU in Providence, R.I., when my jazz buddies there hipped me to this wonderful, now woefully scarce item. It was in heavy rotation from midnight to 3 a.m. for a few seasons.

Twenty-eight years since I first heard it, *Path With A Heart* endures the test of time. Its working model is certainly the Art Ensemble of Chicago, replete with intrusions of "little instruments" played by the ensemble members. Hoffman's "Feel Free" starts with ratchet noises, arco bass, bicycle horns and sparse altissimo horn squeaks and multiphonic honks, before Izu kicks into the buoyant groove underpinning the sweet and sour tune to his delightful "Don't Lose Your Soul," which includes an awkward time shift much like those on some AEC's classics. The more swing-based pieces have that tasty off/on-ness that I associate with Roscoe Mitchell and gang, as well as Fred Hopkins (whose playing Izu often recalls). No idea where he went, but Hoffman sounds perfectly at home here, breaking up a groove or bolstering it. Though they don't have household name recognition, Sams and Jordan are worthy figures, conversant in the Ornette Coleman-derived post-bop vocabulary, deep in the thick of the milieu of "new architecture" that the Midwest's AACM and Black Artists Group had so copiously spread around the globe starting in the late '60s. Sams' "March In Ostinato" starts the B-side with a very



Anthony Braxton-ish composition, the hyper-extended theme bounding off Hoffman's press rolls.

These fellows had their own thing, too, bringing in pan-Asian instruments and ideas. With its sheng and nobbed gongs, "Forgotten Spirits" has a gagaku element, which was certainly unusual at the time, anticipating the full-on Asian-American jazz developments from Jon Jang, Glenn Horiuchi and Fred Ho, signaled by the first Asian-American Jazz Festival in San Francisco, which was held in 1981. RPM was an artist-run label organized by United Front; pianist Jang's LPs *Jang* (which featured the quartet) and *Are You Chinese Or Charlie Chan* (which featured members of the group), as well as the foursome's *Ohm: Unit Of Resistance*, were released on RPM in the years following *Path With A Heart*, which was the label's debut. RPM was defunct by the end of the '80s and much of their activity shifted to Asian Improv Records. United Front also recorded for the German SAJ label, a sister to Free Music Productions. This release remains incredibly rare, so much so that a Google search barely yields anything. If that's the measure of things that are truly obscure nowadays, this album doesn't deserve to be so hidden from view. **DB**

E-mail the Vinyl Freak: vinylfreak@downbeat.com

More than 60 years separate the first jazz recording in 1917 and the introduction of the CD in the early '80s. In this column, DB's Vinyl Freak unearths some of the musical gems made during this time that have yet to be reissued on CD.

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Julian Barratt as
Howard Moon

British Comedian Brings Jazz Background to Hit TV Series

The premise of the popular British comedy series, "The Mighty Boosh," may be familiar: Earnest amateur jazz keyboardist Howard Moon (Julian Barratt) tries to make his glam rocker friend Vince Noir (Noel Fielding) interested in more serious music. But the adventures that spin out from these conversations become anything but standard. They can involve demonic grandmothers inviting Armageddon. Usually, Moon and Noir's rescue depends on a drug-addicted shaman and a talking gorilla.

No matter how fantastical these journeys become, they retain one sense of grounded realism, which stems from Barratt's actual past as a jazz guitar prodigy. He and Fielding base their musical differences in "The Mighty Boosh" on their own clashes (both co-write the show).

"When Noel and I met, he never knew anyone who was into jazz—he lived in a different sort of world than mine," Barratt said. "So he was always taking the mickey out of me for liking it, and we found that amusing, so we ramped up that dynamic."

Barratt's musical world formed as he grew up in Leeds, and his parents took him to see John Scofield, Herbie Hancock and Weather Report when they performed in England. Around that time, he became a serious young musician and attended the late British jazz trumpeter Ian Carr's summer programs. Still, even after touring with such bands as the jazz-funk fusion Groove Solution, Barratt gave up music for comedy while attending the University of Reading.

When Barratt and Fielding teamed up in the '90s, their stage show turned into a radio program and then "The Mighty Boosh" debuted on BBC television in 2004. This year, the Adult Swim cable network picked it up in the United States and the series' three volumes are now available on DVD in the U.S. (through BBC America).

Jazz musicians—real and fictional—are name-checked throughout the series, and improvisation runs throughout Barratt and Fielding's comic style. Barratt adds that when he composes the songs for each episode, narratives require him to draw from a wide musical background.

"If Noel comes up with a character, and it's a transsexual merman who preys on sailors, the music would be a strange Rick James fusion," Barratt said. "It's funny to juxtapose sea creatures and funk."

In the future, Barratt would like to delve deeper into jazz's comic tradition, mentioning Slim Gaillard as an example. A few prominent American jazz musicians are already fans of "The Mighty Boosh," including Scofield, who got turned on to the program from his daughter.

"I thought the episodes were hilarious," Scofield said. "There were so many references to jazz in their dialogues, and I knew right away that someone there was a real jazz aficionado with a wry sense of humor."

Scofield and Barratt have since become friendly, which the one-time jazz student sounds like he can hardly believe.

"All these people who are my heroes from a previous life," Barratt said, "I'm getting to hear from them in this world." —Aaron Cohen

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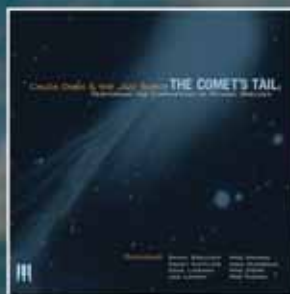
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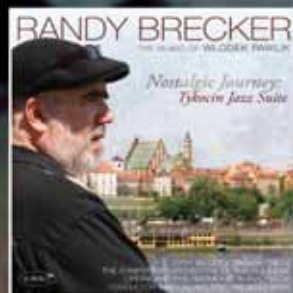
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Umbria Streamlines, Still Takes Risks

Craftsmanship and proportion infuse the culture of Perugia, home of the Umbria Summer Jazz Festival, which ran July 10–19 this year. Festival president Carlo Pagnotti rose to the challenge of operating under a tighter budget than in previous years while maintaining the festival's high standard of refinement.

Pagnotti used only one theater for indoor events. But he left intact the customary mix of first-rate blues, r&b, New Orleans and world music acts who perform day-long, free outdoor concerts, among them singer-songwriter-guitarist K.J. Denhart and her top-shelf New York band as well as the intense soul singer Vaneese Thomas. Vocalist Allan Harris and his trio, performing Nat Cole repertoire, also played outdoors. Indeed, Cole was a festival trope—George Benson, on tour with an orchestra-supported Cole extravaganza, replicated the master's every inflection and tonal nuance. Cole's brother Freddy transformed the Hotel Brufani into an Italian version of Bradley's for his 10-night run, which was this year's only extended residency (multiple extended residences had been a trademark of past festivals).

Other main stage bookings included adult pop and mainstream jazz. James Taylor brought a great band, including Steve Gadd and Larry Goldings. Burt Bacharach presented a so-cheesy-it-was-hip self-retrospective. On the jazz side, Chick Corea and Stefano Bollani performed a spontaneously improvised duet on the standard repertoire. Alto saxophonist Francesco Cafiso augmented Jazz at Lincoln Center's swinging, pan-stylistic set; the Sicilian wunderkind saxophonist wailed on Sherman Irby's surging arrangement of Lou Donaldson's "Blues Walk." With his own quartet, Cafiso projected a lyric voice informed by Charlie Parker, Lee Konitz and Phil Woods alongside such '70s radicals as Anthony Braxton and Julius Hemphill.

Also representing Italy, pianist Enrico Pieranunzi played original compositions with his quintet, and drummer Roberto Gatto rearranged '70s British prog rock for octet. Alto and soprano saxophonist Rosario Giuliani and pianist Dado Moroni blew soulfully in Joe Locke's chamber trio. Trumpet veteran Enrico Rava helmed a post-boomer quintet with trom-



George Lewis

GIANCARLO BELFIORE-UMBRIA JAZZ

bonist Gianluca Petrella.

Among the other main acts, Dave Douglas presented *Brass Ecstasy*, a Lester Bowie homage comprising well-wrought originals that extracted maximum tonal color from French horn player Vincent Chancey, trombonist Luis Bonilla and tubist Marcus Rojas, propelled by inventive rhythms and textures from Nasheet Waits, channeling an inner Max Roach. Road-weary John Scofield kicked out the jams with his Piety Street quartet. Richard Galliano presented nuevo tango and beyond with United Nations quartet.

A pair of experimental projects took a certain courage to book, especially considering Italy's troubled economy. A three-day, six-concert presentation by Chicago's cohesive 21-piece AACM Great Black Music Ensemble under the putative leadership of George Lewis featured compositions by AACM second- and third-wavers Lewis, Nicole Mitchell, Douglas Ewart, Mwata Bowden and Ernest Dawkins, and by fourth-wavers Tomeka Reid and Renee Baker. A choir of four perpetually intune voices-as-instruments, Reid and Baker's cello and violin, Lewis' electronics, two basses and a trapset-and-percussion combination seamlessly integrated with a five-saxophone, three-trumpet, two-trombone big band and exploited the unit's singular instrumentation. The bacchanalian end-of-festival event packed Piazza 4 Novembre, as a throng of revelers grooved to Puerto Rican master conguero Giovanni Hidalgo and Cuban master trapsetter Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez alongside a large ensemble of young Kenyan hand drummers and dancers. —*Ted Panken*

Copenhagen Jazz Festival Revisits History While Embracing Youth

The Copenhagen Jazz Festival is a varied extravaganza that leans away from the summer festival blockbusters and makes sure to demonstrate diversity. That was particularly the case this year for its 31st edition, which ran July 3–12.

The city's must-visit list includes the Jazz Cup, home of an impressive music store, jazz club and also headquarters of the Danish magazine *Jazz Special*. On a Saturday afternoon during the festival, one could catch the nimble and thoughtful pianist Peter Rosenthal's trio and then venture over to the dreamily lavish Frederiksborg Garden, where *We Three*—saxophonist David Liebman, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum—dished up lyricism and feistier energies in a garden party-like setting as a peacock strolled the grounds.

Fascinating and cool young Danish singer Maria Laurette Friis presented her distinctive indie-pop in the hip, renovated old fishing vessel *MS Stubnitz*—retooled as a floating cultural center with an experimental



Chick Corea

KRISTOFFER NOLSEN

music bent. But Friis' greater artistic coup was a tribute to Billie Holiday's final album, *Lady In Satin*. Via Friis, *Lady Day*'s innate melancholic sublimity was given a surprisingly bewitching fresh twist—something akin to an indie shoegazer approach.

A different flavor of introspective Scandinavian musical demeanor marks the special touch of seasoned Danish trumpeter Jens Winther, who played outdoors by a lake in Ørstedsparken—one of several tranquil parks dotting this uncommonly beautiful and green city.

Among official festival headliners, Chick Corea showed up for a solo concert

early in the festival's schedule, and a Nina Simone tribute included Dianne Reeves and Angelique Kidjo. In the delightfully bizarre context of the famed, kitsch-flecked Tivoli Gardens, Yusef Lateef's Universal Quartet combined regular ally Adam Rudolph on percussion alongside Danish percussionist Kreston Osgood and dazzling trumpeter Kasper Tranberg.

Towards festival's end, Dee Dee Bridgewater performed her easier-does-it charts with the fine Tivoli Big Band and Orchestra, outdoors in the Gardens, disseminating musical goodness into many corners of the sprawling compound.

But the most culturally and indigenously significant concert this year, if not the greatest musical success, involved a certain historic Danish-American connection. Danish trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg, who wrote the moody and memorable work *AURA* for Miles Davis 25 years ago (released as a two-disc album by Columbia in 1989), was commissioned to revisit the extended composition with a fresh conceptual attitude. The result, realized by a large and multi-limbed ensemble, was a strangely uneven but ultimately intriguing suite. Many of the meeker passages were laid out in the first half, including a goofy disco take on "What's New," which brought to mind Herb Alpert more than late-era Davis. But the writing got tougher, more complex and more evocative as the program progressed and the sundry facets of the chamber ensemble-meets-big band group were put to good use.

In that more muscular and enigmatic finale, we could, in fact, easily imagine Davis' sonic voice doing its artistic bidding. —Josef Woodard

Saxophonist Allen Slyly Stretches Out at Vanguard

J.D. Allen sings on his tenor saxophone. No hijinks, mind games, bravado—just song, lyrically intact and rhythmically invigorating. In a nutshell, that's what Allen triumphantly showcased on Aug. 12, the second night of his weeklong debut at New York's Village Vanguard with simpatico band mates Gregg August on bass and Rudy Royston on drums. In an alluring 70-minute set, Allen fluidly weaved through 14 tunes—all short, but pleasing takes devoid of lengthy wandering. This was in keeping with his most recent trio CD, *Shine!*, where the numbers range from two minutes to just longer than five.



On the gleefully lopsided swing "Id," introduced with a sly bow of respect to Sigmund Freud, Allen bellowed with a fresh, danceable sensibility. Throughout the set, he rarely overblew, even on the cooking "East Boogie," where he extended his solo, and on the upbeat "Titus" where he sped through a torrent of tenor notes. Allen also avoided getting caught up in a whirlwind of improvisation that would've lost bearing to the song. Cases in point: the lyrical meditation "Se' Lah" and the reflective, hushed cover of the standard "Stardust," which was a showstopper in its quiet beauty.

When Allen slipped out of the spotlight, he crouched in the shadows at the back of the stage near the velvet curtains and comped for August's closely imagined solos. Royston was spotlighted on "Conjuration Of Angels" (composed by Butch Morris) where his spanked and rolling rhythms drove the proceedings.

Mainstream jazz sometimes cloaks itself with esotericism, but Allen steered clear of that at the Vanguard. He chose an organic path where he became engaged, had his say—stretching economically and to the point—then slid out. It wasn't that he didn't have much to express; it's more that Allen spread his expression across the set in a multitude of songs versus an immature—or insecure—saxist blowing his wad on boring multiple-chorus exhibitionism.

—Dan Ouellette

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E.J. Strickland Search and Explore Mission

“When I first got to New York, I was very aggressive on the instrument,” said E.J. Strickland of his drumset approach when he entered the fray in New York City a decade ago.

Now 30, Strickland, whose career over that duration splits evenly between traditional and more exploratory approaches to jazz, would learn lasting lessons on “how to support more and not be overbearing” from his various colleagues and employers. These include his identical twin, Marcus Strickland, as well as Russell Malone, Ravi Coltrane, Cassandra Wilson, the various members of the New Jazz Composers Octet and, more recently, the Night of the Cookers Sextet with Billy Harper and Charles Tolliver.

“Russell was the first leader who told me I was overplaying, not really listening for what I could do for his group,” Strickland said. “He said, ‘You don’t want to be too hip, because two hips make an ass.’ That stuck with me. The instrument itself is not designed to be understated. I needed to find a way to do what the drummers I respect did—to transcend the instrument, be able to play fast figures and complex rhythms with a lot of energy, but at a volume that’s balanced with the group. Finding that balance on the kit is hard to do.”

Strickland demonstrates these investigations on his debut release, *In This Day* (StrickMusic). He propels his tenor saxophonist brother, alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw, pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischnig and conguero Pedro Martinez through a suite of melodic originals that blend highbrow jazz harmony with rhythms that morph in and out of swing and straight-eighth feels along with more overtly African and Afro-Caribbean sources. The horns sing in continual dialogue with the leader, who focuses less on bringing his technical legerdemain to the forefront than on deploying it to enhance the ensemble sound.

“I didn’t have a clear idea how I wanted my group to sound,” Strickland said. “I was always writing, and could see that there was something developing with my own compositional voice. But I wasn’t sure what instruments I wanted to use. Some of my songs are very syncopated, so I wanted that percussive feeling in the horn parts. I grew up with Marcus, watched his rhythmic sensibility grow and develop, and that led me to want two mutually sensitive horn players who bounce off of each

other rhythmically.”

Educated in the rudiments by his father—a classical percussionist and proficient r&b and funk drummer—Strickland developed his ears during adolescence and teen years through countless hours playing duets with his brother. “It helped me focus on listening, to surrender to the ideas you’re hearing back towards you, as opposed to trying to force ideas to come out,” he said.

While attending the New School in New York, Strickland—by then under the deep influence of Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes and Jeff Watts—studied with an all-star cohort of teachers, among them Joe Chambers (“he wanted me to respect the origins of certain rhythms”), Ralph Peterson (“he helped me develop my power and technique”), Carl Allen (“he focused on developing a beautiful sound on the kit”), Jimmy Cobb (“tips on the ride cymbal”) and Lewis Nash (“we worked on brush technique, timekeeping, soloing ideas”).

“I grabbed different things from everybody,” Strickland said. “It was a perfect place to open me up. Everyone around me was into so many different things, and I got into those things by hanging around them and going to shows they were into.”

This year, Strickland further displayed the increasing clarity of his drum conception on Ravi Coltrane’s open-ended quartet session, *Blending Times* (Savoy), and on his brother’s concurrent releases, *Of Song* (Criss Cross) and *Idiosyncracies* (StrickMusic).

“Both groups have allowed me to be myself,” Strickland said. “Ravi gave me a lot of freedom, but he also pushed me to think out of the box, to use different feels, to search for something different.

“Our open-mindedness is due to the pioneers—John Coltrane and Miles Davis were two of them—who had the courage to explore areas that others said they couldn’t,” he continued. “They opened up everything for us—we weren’t afraid to journey further into other genres, feels and rhythms. It was a natural progression. People broke cracks in the ceiling, and now the ceiling is broken. Almost everything that’s coming out today is a fusion of stuff, and some of the other genres are starting to incorporate more jazz into their thing. We think we’re respecting the tradition by continuing to search and explore.”

—Ted Panken



Aram Shelton 🌟 Bay Area's Chicago Ambassador

Four years after reedist Aram Shelton left Chicago to resettle in Oakland, he remains inextricably linked to the Midwest. Along with studying electronic music at Mills College and working in Bay Area bands, he shuttles between the two cities because of what he calls "frustration with not having a band that can play all the time."

"The thing about playing with good musicians is that they're always in demand," Shelton said. "It's hard to say, 'Hey, can you do just this one band?' It's not going to happen."

This year, his Singlespeed Music label has released two albums recorded with cohorts from both scenes, one by his free bop Ton Trio called *The Way*, and another all-improvised session, *Last Distractions*. Shelton also still works with Arrive, Jason Adasiewicz's Rolldown and the Fast Citizens, all of them based in Chicago.

"I get a lot out of playing with the musicians here, and for all of us to succeed, we need to keep these bands together and growing," he said. "I'm also glad that the folks here allow me to come back and merge back into the scene so easily."

The Palm City, Fla., native moved to Chicago after earning his saxophone degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville in 1999. He formed the trio Dragons 1976 with drummer Tim Daisy and bassist Jason Ajemian, but as the combo started attracting attention for its first album his associates became increasingly busy with other commitments.

Despite Shelton's own steady playing opportunities in Chicago, better weather and other opportunities beckoned in California.

"I wanted to explore the electronic side of what I was doing, and Mills was good because I was able to keep working on what I'd been doing, but also to get a degree for it and to learn more."

Shelton learned about recording, but he also immersed himself in Max/MSP sound processing. "I focused my work on electroacoustic pieces that are centered around extending the sounds of acoustic instruments via computer-based electronics and a technique I have named Phrase Modification, where phrases played on acoustic instruments are recorded and played back, but rearranged to create new instances.

"An advantage I find in the Bay Area is that I can play more gigs with the same group," he continued, "which allows the music to develop more, a side effect of the smaller scene." Shelton's just formed a new trio with drummer Weasel Walter and bassist Devin Hoff, while Fast Citizens recently released *Two Cities* (Delmark). Although Shelton's work with electronics doesn't figure into the ebullient music of Fast Citizens, it does reflect a commitment to eschewing endless strings of solos sandwiched by theme statements.

Despite ongoing work with Chicagoans, Shelton seems content in Oakland. He mentioned that on the first Dragons 1976 European tour people would always ask about Chicago. "I was living on Oakland and Ajemian was living in New York," he said. "It reinforced the idea that I didn't need to be in one place."

—Peter Margasak

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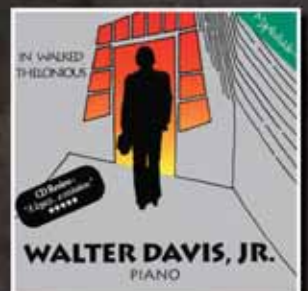
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— Max Roach

WALTER DAVIS JR. In Walked Thelonious

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Sunny Jain 🌟 Personal Ragas

In leading the band Red Baraat, drummer Sunny Jain finds himself standing in front of a half-dozen horn players and two percussionists. Rather than playing a trap set, he strikes the barrel-shaped drum strapped across his chest. The two-headed bhangra dhol originated from India; it serves as the focal point of an ensemble Jain likens to a New Orleans brass band steeped in South Asian music.

Red Baraat and the more conventionally configured Sunny Jain Collective place the drummer in the burgeoning vanguard of Indian-American jazz musicians. Though the groups differ stylistically, their respective missions remain the same: to create a hybrid not only reflecting Jain's music background, but also his heritage.

Jain's parents emigrated around 1970 from North India. Jain, who grew up in Rochester, N.Y., earned music degrees from Rutgers University and New York University. While Jain holds the bop tradition in high regard, he has no desire to revisit the era. He looks beyond Indian music,

"To just play jazz music straight-up like Philly Joe Jones was great for

an educational purpose," Jain said in his Brooklyn, N.Y., home. "But it wasn't me. To play like Zakir Hussain on the drum set isn't like me, either: I'm not a tabla player, I didn't grow up in India and I didn't grow



SEBASTIAN TASCOTT

Pedro Giraudo 🌟 Shuffle Resistant

Bassist and composer Pedro Giraudo fears that with the arrival of the iPod and the dreaded ringtone, people are becoming less tolerant of extended works, especially those with specific song sequencing.

"The iPod was a great invention, but on the other hand, everything becomes background music," said Giraudo, the leader of a 16-piece jazz orchestra that performs regularly at New York's Jazz Gallery. "Recorded music was an amazing invention, but sometimes it takes away the experience of listening and focusing. I don't know how many people actually sit down, listen and enjoy a CD nowadays."

While Giraudo is conscientious of making some concessions for his audience regarding some of its waning attention span, he is by no means giving in to technology's whim. His new disc, *El Viaje* (PGM Music), affords an opulent listening experience of modern, orchestral jazz, brimming with passionate improvisations, deliberate contrapuntal melodies and plush harmonies. Indeed, some of the compositions would be considered long: The title track approaches the 20-minute mark. Giraudo insists that *El Viaje* proceeds in such a purposeful manner that it would discourage iPod shuffling.

"I put so much effort in deciding the song sequence. I'm quite sure that Duke Ellington really sat down and thought about things like this," he said.

Like Ellington, Giraudo, who refers to his 16-piece ensemble as a chamber jazz orchestra rather than a big band, writes melodies with specific musicians in mind.

"Chamber ensemble usually refers to music that has one person per instrument," Giraudo said. "So I think about each person in the ensemble playing. I'm



ERIN O'BRIEN

up playing Hindustani classical music.

"But what is me," he continued, "is a confluence of these backgrounds and traditions kind of flowing together. And it's not strictly Indian music and jazz. It's Brit pop like New Order and the Cure. It's Radiohead, it's Smashing Pumpkins."

At a summer gig in a bar in Queens, Jain performed with pianist Steve Blanco, whose repertoire spans pop songs from the 1970s and 1980s. The trio's reading of Pink Floyd's "Us And Them" veered from trance-like to volatile. The Police's "Synchronicity" included sharp tempo shifts and the song's simple structure lent itself to the group's penchant for free playing. "We can't deny that groove we grew up with—the straight eighth-note feel—whether it's rock or funk," Jain said between sets. "You still need to know that vocabulary those bop masters laid out. But to play period music is to not be myself at this moment in time."

Jain recorded *Red Baraat* last fall, and will release an album early next year. The Sunny Jain Collective has issued several albums, and Jain has begun recording *The Taboo Project*, which will feature a cycle of six songs commissioned by Chamber Music America. Jain premiered the music in December 2007 at Joe's Pub in Manhattan. Jain adapted the work of contemporary poets writing in Hindi, Urdu and English. The poets include Ali Husain Mir and Ifi Naseem, who tackle religious strife, domestic violence and homosexuality.

"These are issues that are not comfortably and openly discussed or dealt with in South Asia. At the same time these are universal issues," Jain said.

In addition to original music, Jain wants to translate India's music traditions to the confines of a jazz group. This songbook encompasses not just the ragas (melody) and tals (rhythm) common in Hindustani and Carnatic music, but also the music of Bollywood, religious songs and bhangra, a folkloric music in the Punjab region of both India and Pakistan. Jain compares this crosspollination to the manner in which jazz musicians adapt music from Broadway and Tin Pan Alley.

"But at the end of the day, it's not meant to be overt," he said. "If I wanted to do that, I would hire a tabla player, I would hire a sitar player and I would say, 'Hey, this is Indian jazz.' There's a few of us doing this here in New York, and we all have our own approach of expressing our cultural identity as Indian-Americans. This is my approach." —Eric Fine

lucky to have the same musicians for a very long time. Some of the guys have been in the band since 2000. We've developed a language within the band."

Hailing from Cordoba, Argentina, and born to a symphonic orchestra-conducting father, it comes as no surprise that European classical music and tango also inform Giraudo's musical language.

"I'm not sure if you'll call my music avant-garde, but in terms of the tango tradition, my music falls into the very modern tango," Giraudo said. "There are some tango elements in my music, but they are very subtle. I think the most Argentinean element is the sense of nostalgia."

Giraudo trained early on classical violin and piano. As a teenager he strapped on the electric bass, initially playing rock and pop, which eventually led him to jazz. "Since I was in South America, most people's concept of jazz is more jazz-fusion, so I was familiar with Chick Corea's Elektric Band and Mike Stern."

When he arrived in the United States, Giraudo first wanted to study with Stern's bassist Jeff Andrews. Eventually through contact with other students at the Manhattan School of Music, Giraudo got more exposure to jazz's rich tradition. "I was pretty clueless at first," Giraudo recalls. "For instance, I'd never heard of the name 'Monk.' I knew some things, but at first I thought Duke Ellington was Dizzy Gillespie."

El Viaje's concept is also partially about his journey to becoming a new father as well as growing as a composer.

"I definitely hear my voice clearer on this CD," Giraudo said. "And my tendency is to write longer and longer pieces." —John Murph

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**JEFF "TAIN" WATTS
LEWIS NASH
MATT WILSON**

FOLLOW THE LEADERS

By Ken Micallef // Photos by Jimmy Katz

The history of jazz drummers as leaders is illustrious if not particularly long-lived. Often relegated to "drummer only" or "non-musician" status by ignorant fellow musicians, jazz drummers have conquered the odds to create music easily on par with that of any instrumentalist. Such drummer/leaders as Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, Chick Webb, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Kenny Clarke and Mel Lewis forged the paths that today's stylistically well-versed, multi-instrumental, compositionally adept drummers follow to advance their own art.

Surrounded by the vintage drum sets of such legends as Rich, Krupa, Jones, Sonny Greer and Louis Bellson (and many more) found at Steve Maxwell Vintage and Custom Drums in New York, three of today's premier drummer/leader practitioners sat down this summer to discuss their art, their drumming and their place in the lineage of the great drummer/leaders who preceded them.

"Someone has to act, someone has to write and someone has to direct," Lewis Nash says. "We're stepping behind the camera." Matt Wilson and Jeff "Tain" Watts share his attitude. All have released albums as leaders, worked with a diverse cadre of musicians and toured and developed numerous recent projects.

Nash is perhaps the most recorded jazz drummer of his generation, with sides as far ranging as Tommy Flanagan, Joe Lovano, Willie Nelson, Kenny Burrell, Betty Carter and Oscar Peterson. Most recently, Nash co-led The Blue Note Seven, and he is an ongoing musical director at Lincoln Center. His solo albums include *Rhythm Is My Business* and *Stompin' At The Savoy*. His fourth CD as a leader includes his current quintet and is set for an early 2010 release; he can also be found on upcoming CDs from the Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Star Big Band and Dee Dee Bridgewater.

Wilson's latest quartet album, *That's Gonna Leave A Mark* (his eighth as a leader), follows work as a leader with Arts and Crafts, Carl Sandburg Project, Futurists, Trio M and sideman work with Joe Lovano, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, Marty Ehrlich/Ray Anderson Quartet, Elvis Costello, Jane Ira Bloom, Lee Konitz and Myra Melford.

Watts, after long stints with the brothers Marsalis (he departed Branford's group in mid-2009), recorded his first solo effort with 1991's *Megawatts*, followed 10 years later by such well received albums as *Citizen Tain*, *Bar Talk* and, most recently, *Watts*, which documents his signature compositions and his



mad sense of humor. Watts also appears on upcoming releases from Odean Pope (*Odean's List*), John Beasley (*Positootly*), a live CD with Pat Martino and one from David Kikoski (*Mostly Standards*).

Lists, credits and factoids say little about the raw talent, wisdom and skill each of these men brings to bear on the jazz world at large. Their grasp of history is sure, their views on bandleading challenging, and their camaraderie and joy in discussing their craft obvious. Most definitely, it's time to give the drummer some.

DownBeat: *Why did each of you pursue becoming a leader and not remain a sideman only?*

Lewis Nash: For me, it was seeing and talking to people like Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, even Billy Higgins—who, though he didn't compose, led with what he was doing. Those people have influenced all of us to have a certain stature at the drums and be able to dictate certain things from the drums. All of us have ideas, things we jot down and file away, and because we've played with so many different people as sidemen, we get a lot of ideas from all these different directions.

Matt Wilson: That's why it makes for interesting bandleading, because we play with so many people. And the big picture presentation can be different because we are thinking about so many elements in the music, including groove.

Jeff "Tain" Watts: I came up with these different groups mostly playing original music. I didn't have a very long apprenticeship with older musicians to do a lot of interpretation with standard repertoire; I just started to accumulate a lot of original music. I started doing gigs and Branford signed me to Sony. Then I always found myself at a balance between being somebody in the band playing and trying to have a musical presentation. There are people who come out to see you play, so I have to remind myself to take a drum solo. You'll look up in the middle of the gig and people will be looking at you for some drum excitement! [laughs]

DB: *What significant events contributed to your growth as leaders?*

Nash: After a while there are certain things you want to express, and you're not able to express them in any other situation, so you've got to create a situation. Sometimes I would be the leader in a situation where I wasn't playing my arrangements or musical repertoire. Maybe I was the musical director, and since you have a leader's mindset you know how to pull the elements together and make the performance come off. When leading, you're thinking of a lot of different things ...

Watts: ... the program ...

Nash: ... pacing of the set ...

Watts: ... things that don't have anything to do with music!

Nash: Sometimes you have to pull the band back with the drums: "OK, let's go a different place!"

From left: Wilson, Watts and Nash play vintage kits that once belonged to jazz legends Joe Morello, Elvin Jones and Kenny Clarke, respectively, in the museum section of Steve Maxwell Vintage and Custom Drums.



DB: *Does all of that somehow make you a better drummer?*

Nash: Maybe all of that makes you a better overall musician moreso than making you a better drummer.

Wilson: You think about some classic big band drummers—maybe it was a different vibe, maybe their presentation was more about that. Maybe someone like Louie Bellson or Chick Webb, they still really cared about the music.

DB: *What else contributes to your evolution as a leader?*

Watts: You're in all these situations playing for different bandleaders who are making decisions about repertoire and about presentation. You get all these little lessons: How to make sure that everyone is on the bus at the same time. Get a room list so you can call the bass player if he oversleeps. And it's all in there whether you are actually going to be a bandleader part time or full time. I just began accumulating music, and I got a deal, and part of that is trying to sell the record that you made. I'm into documenting compositions and putting together a set of music and looking at the people and trying to shape a set to make them feel a certain way.

DB: *How do you gauge an audience like that?*

Watts: Sometimes I just look at the types of people or age groups. If I'm playing my music, I'll choose a piece that might strike a familiar chord with an older crowd, for instance. There's a traditional jazz crowd that you can play a whole set of jazz to, but unless there's something that's right down the middle or a blues or something really swinging, they won't be fulfilled.

DB: *So, Jeff, you wouldn't bring out Zappa-esque material like "The Devil's Ring Tone: The Movie" from Watts for a roomful of geezers?*

Nash: I like the way you put that. [laughs] "Hmmm, we have a bunch of geezers out there tonight!"

Watts: There's a lot of old hippies out there, too, some deadheads. You have to feel them out.

I try to get the different food groups together in the first few tunes, maybe something exciting, something swinging, something with a groove and go from there.

Wilson: I don't change my sets, really. I just feel that if it is presented well, and you balance it out, if it's honest it works. Dewey Redman would play all kinds of music in one night, and I want to do the same thing. You can play free, play a standard, play a Gershwin or an Ornette Coleman tune, you can mix it up.

Nash: You don't play down to an audience. But if you're on a jazz cruise, for example, they don't want to hear something adventurous, they are not the typical jazz fan who likes creative improvised music. The jazz party scene comes from a New Orleans style, and if you're the least bit adventurous even playing bebop that audience might get a little annoyed. So in that instance it's advisable to take into account who is in the audience.

Wilson: You can play accessible music, but if it's not personal to the audience, they'll feel neglected. Then you are alienating them. It all depends on how you embrace those folks and feel that energy.

DB: *Lewis, how do you lead or control the band from the drum chair, as you mentioned?*

Nash: You can't really control music. You're directing the band. You might initiate, and what happens after that is a group thing. You might want to nudge it one way.

Wilson: Dewey used to say, "People sound their best playing with me." If you can allow somebody to go some place and you're not controlling it, that's great. As a leader, if I try to put someone in an environment, I don't have to say anything to them. They know how to play their instrument. You trust them. Dewey always said, "Find people you love to play with and pick the music."

DB: *But is there a way to lead the band from the drumset?*

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Watts: It's a feeling. You think, "Is this the right time?" "If there's a vamp at the beginning of the tune, how long will the vamp be?" And from the drums you're shaping the vamp, you're breaking it down, deciding how long to play on the vamp, and then you cue a little thing to stick the melody or whatever.

Nash: If you're not doing it the same way all the time, the other musicians are going to have to look to you. If you play a different feel than what you usually do, or if you play brushes instead of sticks, or if you play Latin rather than straight time—that tells them. And often the band will take the music places you never thought of.

Wilson: A great band just seems to go. That trust factor is there when it's all aural. Musicians get nervous when they have to look for things. It's how you shape the music—they'll know where to go.

DB: *What else prompted your goals as leaders? Better money?*

[loud, side-splitting laughter]

Watts: There's a rim shot!

DB: *Better playing situations?*

[more laughter]

DB: *Compositional expression?*

Nash: Well, that is a big one for me.

Watts: Yeah, for me, too.

DB: *So, leader money isn't better than sideman money?*

Nash: Often it's better or at least on par, but sometimes you have to take a loss as a band-leader to get your music out there.

Wilson: And there is the satisfaction, too, in getting people to come out and having them leave satisfied.

Watts: Fooled 'em again!

Wilson: That is why Art Blakey did it. He loved it. He wanted to play. There is the satisfaction that you pulled it off, you did it.

DB: *Which drummer/leaders had the biggest impact on you?*

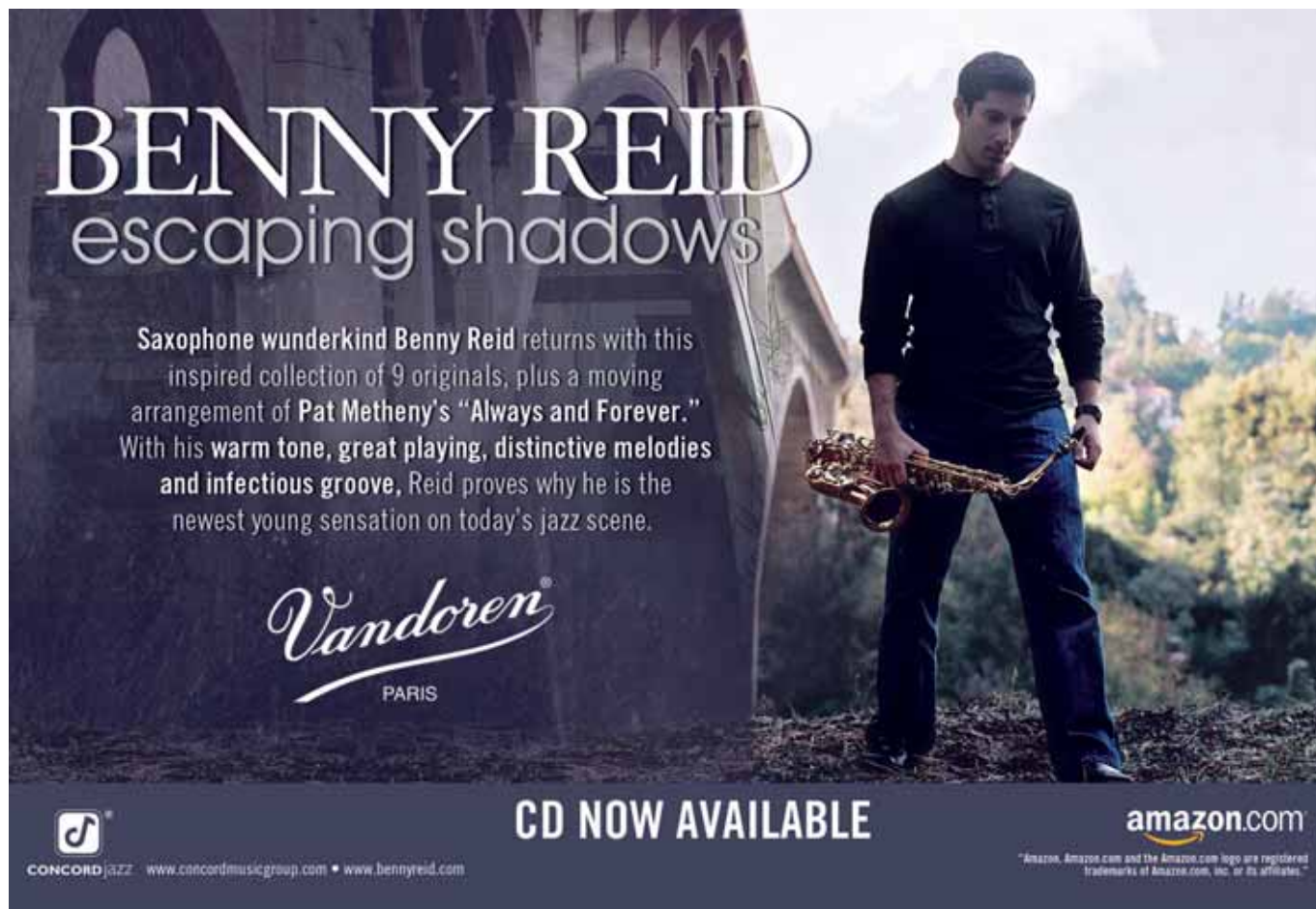
Nash: At different stages, different guys influenced me. Max Roach was probably the most important because he was different, he was daring, he was playing in 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11, and he would do things without piano. He was putting the drums front and center and saying this instrument can be as expressive and make as much music as any other instrument.

Wilson: There was a Jack DeJohnette record I really loved, *Album Album*. I still love all those ECM records and his New Directions records with John Abercrombie. That was a pivotal moment for me. *Album Album* was cool, just the way it was put together. I asked Jack once about the energy in his right hand, and he took his stick and just hit the floor tom. It was like a nature show: The birds flew and the elephants started charging. Then he sat down and played, and his energy was unbelievable.

Watts: For me, just seeing somebody like Billy Cobham and his command of the band, and playing all this intricate stuff with power and writing all this music. There's music on *Crosswinds* that people are trying to do right now. This is prior to my "jazz education," but then each one of these guys has a lesson in their presentation. Like Art Blakey, he truly wasn't a composer, but he put such a big stamp on the band just from swinging it that hard. He and Elvin [Jones], their interpretation of Afro-Cuban rhythms is so strong that it has influenced how Cubans and Africans play the drums.

So Art in how he commanded the group; Elvin, his conception of the beat and how he could play very straight things but then also play very abstractly. The conviction of Elvin's whole thing is so strong that the band trusts him. And Elvin's demeanor was so cool. You'd see him on the gig and he would be so nice and direct and cool with you. You'd think, "Elvin really digs me." Then he'd see just some dude and he's like, "What's up, man!" Elvin was nice to everybody! [laughs] So I should be nice, too. Then Max Roach controlling the band a whole 'nother way with a different focus. He had all these fine lines and different contexts for presenting music and framing the drums. And Tony Williams, up to the end he was really focusing on composition.

DB: *What did you ask the masters when you had the chance to hang with them?*



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Nash: You thought, "Maybe I can steer him to talk about something," but you didn't start asking questions right away.

Watts: But cats do that now, right? Cats jump in there like it's an interview or something. [*in a helium voice*] "So, Elvin, why did you ...?" That just doesn't feel right.

Nash: You learn from those guys by being around them and observing them. Once I was on a tribute concert to Art Blakey with Elvin Jones. At the sound check, Elvin's over there and I'm thinking, "I'm onstage with Elvin Jones!" Later, Elvin was talking about this shuffle we were playing that night, discussing the left hand backbeat. He said, "You don't really have to lift your arm up too much, just a nice snap with the wrist." I'm listening real intently. Then that night on the concert, Elvin's elbow is way up above his ear!

Watts: He set you up!

Nash: Yeah. And he had a huge grin on his face!

DB: *How do you keep a working band together?*

Nash: You want to work enough times throughout the year to make sure that the band has a consistent sound. If you're going to be a band leader you have to think about the sound you're trying to project. You may have to use different players, but they should still be part of the group sound. It's about your vision, but that doesn't dictate everything they do.

Wilson: You choose guys you love. Lewis and I tussle over Terrell Stafford. But you trust somebody else coming in and that they will be fine, too.

DB: *Lewis, you told me once that a musician could be a total head case but if he brings something special to the bandstand ...*

Nash: These guys know what I am talking about!

Wilson: Sure!

Nash: Everybody doesn't have to be normal. You need a little craziness sometimes.

Watts: A little flavor.

Nash: A guy might not show up on a gig, but you're happy when he does!

Watts: Once Elvin was really late to a gig, but Coltrane waited and didn't play anything. And after the set, he said, "That's Elvin Jones. Now you understand why we waited."

DB: *What is your recording philosophy when cutting sides as a leader?*

Nash: I am so focused on the music, I leave the recording to the guys who are turning the knobs. There's a group of engineers, historically, who have been attracted to recording this music, and they're not making a lot of money, either. They're like us. But we know them, and we know they do it partially for the love of the music. They're a part of our vibe as well. I try to remember those engineers who really got my sound on someone else's date: Jim Anderson, David Baker, James Farber, Catherine Geller.

Watts: It's like another bandmember.

Wilson: Matt Balitsaris has produced and recorded my records on Palmetto at his studio in Pennsylvania. If you're a painter or a plumber,

you don't deal with electricity. You trust them just like you trust musicians.

DB: *Who are the unsung drummer/leaders?*

Nash/Wilson/Watts: Victor Lewis. Ralph Peterson Jr. Chico Hamilton had great bands, and he's still playing. Joe Chambers. Louis Hayes. Al Foster. Jimmy Cobb and Ben Riley are still leading. Ed Blackwell was like a scientist when it came to music and the drums. Dannie Richmond is another one. And Roy Brooks.

Wilson: I love Billy Hart's *Enchance*. And *Oshumare*. That's a bad record. And younger

guys like John Hollenbeck writing all this crazy stuff. Tyshawn Sorey is taking chances.

Watts: And Dafnis Prieto.

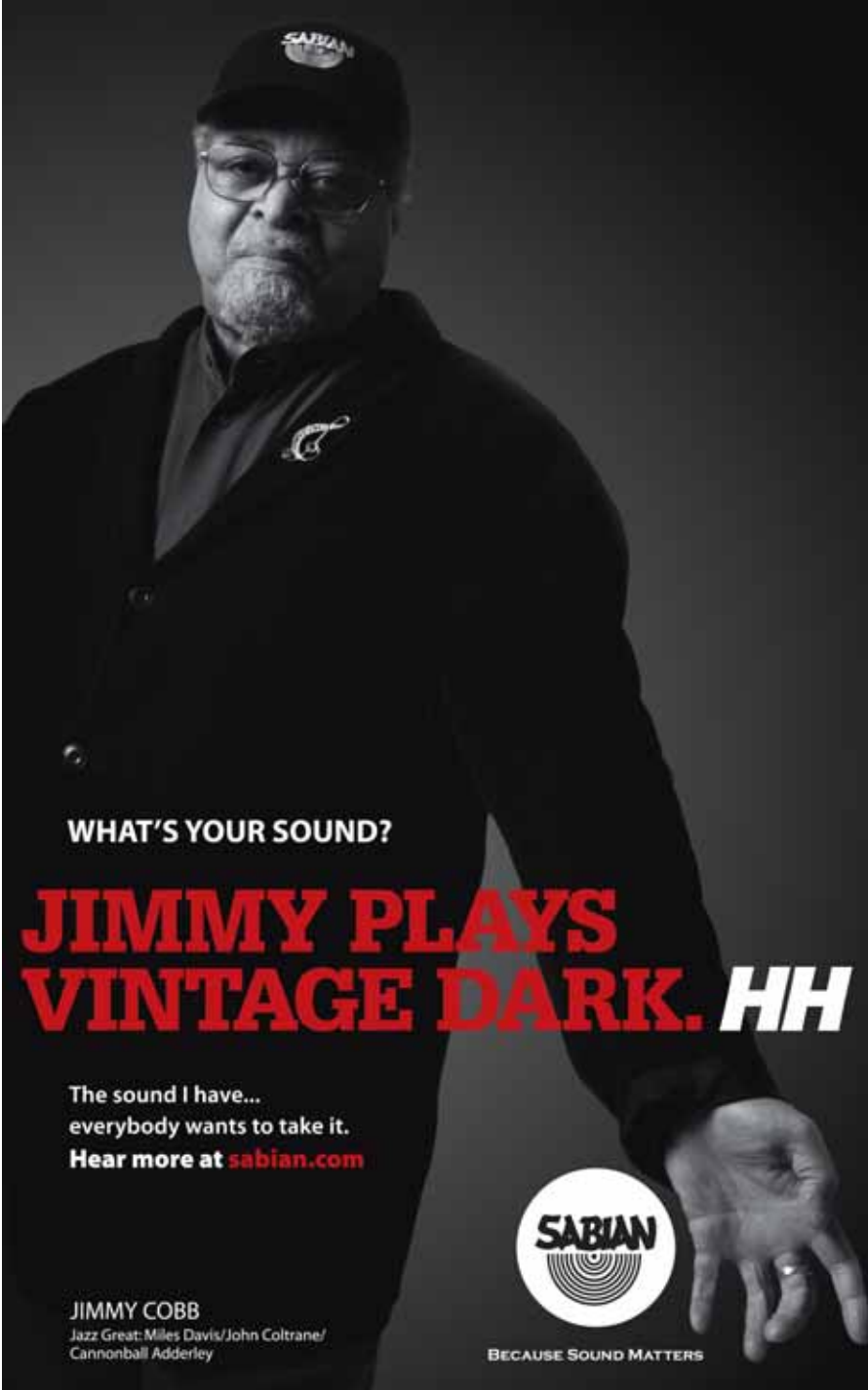
DB: *Do we need more drummer/leaders?*

Nash: If they feel it, go for it. Things will happen naturally. Drummers are hearing a lot of different things now, so they will bring something else when they become bandleaders.

Wilson: It doesn't have to be either/or. Andrew Cyrille makes great records.

All: Yeah.

Watts: It's going to be a whole 'nother thing. These young cats will beam some drums up! **DB**



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ART BLAKEY

Bu's Delights and Laments

by John Litweiler // March 25, 1976

On his records, everything Art Blakey plays seems larger than life, so that it's a surprise to see him in a club, engaged by cymbals and drums. Close up, he is medium-sized in every way, but his face and his dramatic speech again magnify life, events. When he laughs, he throws his head back to join the gods in merriment. When irritated or angry, his head turns down, his eyes glare and he resembles a gargoyle. His face is lined as though he'd stood hatless in the rain every spring of his 56 years; his voice is harsh, often expressing extremes of feeling.

He is a Messenger; in time, his mission has become an organic part of him. His evangelism—verbally, as well as from behind his drum set—has been remarkable for its determination and persistence. He is in dead earnest when he tells you, “If I couldn't play music I'd be around doing banks in—not robbing them, but trying to be a banker, to steal me some money like the rest of them. If Nixon and them could do it, I sure could.” For most of us, music, as Art often says, “washes away the dust of everyday life.” For Art Blakey music *is* life: Man and message are one, and he and his Messengers nightly present a pageant of the history of jazz, from early swing to avant garde.

I met Art Blakey in an air-conditioned coffee shop on a steaming Chicago day. The conversation ranged over many topics, and the master drummer's mood fluctuated between satisfaction with the condition of jazz and pessimism, or even disgust, at the social circumstances surrounding the music.

Curiously, Blakey has influenced 1976 jazz to a degree completely out of proportion to his popularity: There've always been more glittery groups and tinselly tympanists. Among important Jazz Messengers over the years, only Kenny Dorham, Byas and McCoy Tyner made their reputations *before* joining Blakey. Fifteen other discoveries—from Clifford Brown down to Woody Shaw—proved major modern influences while members of Blakey's bands. Even now, Blakey expresses confidence that if a last-minute need arises, the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, or Tyner are ready to rejoin him.

The band Blakey brought to Chicago included two new faces, tenor-soprano saxist David Schmitzler and bassist Yoshio “Chin” Suzuki. “Come out and hear these kids that're playing,” Art said pointedly. “When they become stars people say, ‘Ooh!’—but it was there all the time.”

Two long-familiar Blakey partners came, too: trumpeter Bill Hardman, he of the many-noted, clean, stubbornly melodic line; and pianist Walter Davis Jr., the current “musical director,” composer-arranger, bright bop soloist, the band's glue. Onstage, from a happy rock beat behind a tenor solo, to a fast, intricate Davis piece, to interplay with the brilliantly intense trumpeter, Blakey powered the band.

When asked if he was close to Kenny Clarke and Max Roach in the 1940s when the modern drum style developed, Blakey responded, “I think the styles are similar because the times were the source. You hear it around, and first thing you know, you're doing it. So naturally I do many things I heard them do—especially Max, because he was very close to me. A lot of things he could do made sense to me, the things they were playing, interpreting arrangements. Running into each other was a natural thing. There were just certain styles that would fit into this music, certain runs, certain drummers that the cats would pick: Shadow Wilson, Max Roach, Klook, myself, Philly Joe, Art Taylor—he loved Max, and you could hear it, too: Ike Day died early; Tiny Kahn was a hell of a drummer, and a hell of an arranger; and Alan Dawson never got the credit that's due him.”

The significance of Blakey's development was not lost on the innova-

tive drummers who followed him in the '60s and '70s: Anthony Williams, Ed Blackwell, Sunny Murray, Milford Graves and Philip Wilson took Blakey's ideas to their logical philosophical extremes. They often achieve intensity not far removed from Blakey's own internal constant fire. It's typical of Art that he's unconcerned with his influence on other drummers; when I brought up Williams and Pete LaRoca, Art only said, “I love those cats, 'cause they're still growing—no telling where they're going in 15, 20 years, when something else is happening. I'd like to be here to hear it.”

“I'm doing a book about my whole life, and Doubleday is printing it. I'm just doing it a little bit at a time, as it comes to me and I sit down at the tape recorder. I've read a lot of books about jazz, and I felt that it's about time a book should come from the people who are in the business, who know what's going on and what progress has been made. Somebody had to do something because musicians are so wrapped up in what they're doing we don't like to get down and talk about it. I've seen and lived through quite a bit of it, and I'd like to put it down so people would know what happens.”

“I go back to when Louis Armstrong was a big thing because he could hit high C. I go back to Baby Dodds and Ray Bauduc at the drums, Red Nichols, all these people—I go back to when you listened on a crystal set: Fletcher Henderson and his guys, Earl Hines from the Grand Terrace here in Chicago. Those were Prohibition days, with Eliot Ness running around, and musicians figured into that. It's still the same gangsters, only now the weapon is the pencil with the piece of paper.”

“When I came up, black bands—big 18- to 20-piece bands—used to play all the big hotels in New York, even in Pittsburgh, my home: Don Redman, Cab Calloway, Fletcher Henderson. And after they saw how the art form was progressing, the white musicians came into jazz. This is where the art began to break down all that racial prejudice; they fought a lot of battles, from Bix Beiderbecke and Benny Goodman to where it is today, and I appreciate that. At one time here in the Midwest, if you couldn't play in a jug you couldn't get a gig playing jazz. People used to come to hear the bands just to look at the saxophone, because it was a pretty thing to look at. All that happened, and people should know about it. One beautiful thing that helped bring me into this business was the way the artists and musicians look upon a human being as just being a human being. If you could play, that was it.”

“I've had bands since I was 15 years old. I was playing a piano with the best band in Pittsburgh—18 pieces—and the best gig, too. We sounded like Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, we played Benny Goodman and Benny Carter things. I played with all of the big bands: Andy Kirk, Lucky Millinder, Jimmie Lunceford, Earl Hines—who was a fantastic man—Count Basie sometimes when Jo Jones was sick. I even filled in with Duke when Louis Bellson married Pearl Bailey. I used to listen to all their records, and I listened to them rehearse, so when they needed a drummer, I knew the book. I needed all that experience; that's what helps me today.”

“When I was coming up, my thing was Chick Webb, a master. He and Sid Catlett were my favorites. I like Kaiser Marshall, too—he invented the hi-hat sock cymbal. Sid Catlett used dynamics more than anyone. I liked a lot of them. Baby Dodds has a big belt buckle with some diamonds in it, used to wear silk shirts, and when he'd be playing, his shirt would just shimmy right in time with the music. I love Sonny Greer, that's the Dorian Gray of the drummers, boy, he'll live forever and look just as young. Jo Jones played what was called the Western drums; and Klook and Chick Webb and those cats played the Eastern drums, on the top cymbal. Baby

Dodds used to play mostly on the snare drum.

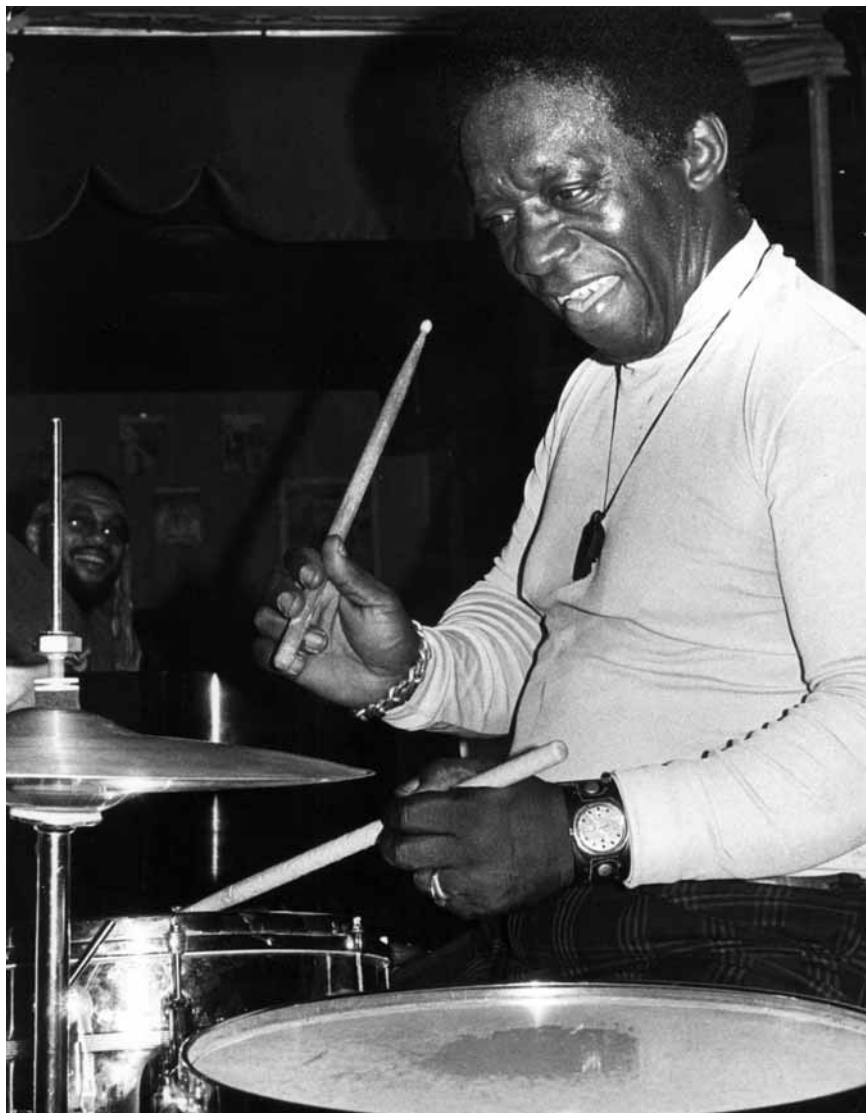
"Respect is the most important thing in the world today, because that's the only thing that follows you to the grave. You never find an armored truck following a hearse. All artists in this country want respect for what they're doing. In Europe, in other countries, it's not what's on your head, it's what's in your head; over here it's how much money you got, and a lot of people have to get out of that groove. This is why so many great artists have left: We lost Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Don Byas, Bud Powell, Art Taylor's very happy in Europe where he wants to be. I'll tell you another great musician we lost, and that's Slide Hampton. A hardcore jazz musician who couldn't make it here. All we had to do was give those men the respect due them. The greatest one of all time, Louis Armstrong, died a pauper compared with some of these rock artists."

Art Blakey on Don Byas: "I had two tenor players. Jeeminy, he was here in the United States [in 1970] and he wasn't working, and I couldn't stand that, so I said, 'Come on, work with me.' Fantastic artist, plus the young guys in the group took advantage of his experience. He's the one who originated it, him and Dizzy and Max and Oscar Pettiford—that's the first bebop group I ever heard. We played ballads because he's the king of that. He couldn't take no more of it. These guys were little guys—nothing—when he left the country; they were running around with records for him to autograph. Now, when he came back after 25 years, they're big shots and presidents at record companies. He'd go around to get a record date—he knew them, or thought he did—all of a sudden it's, 'Well, Don, you know, Don.' He still ain't getting as much respect as when he left.

"I understood him, too; he was tired. They came back at him like he was nothing. Over 60 years old, and he just went back to drinking a fifth of vodka a day. Some days he'd pay \$100 a bottle, because he couldn't get it in some countries. You can't stand up under that. I talked to him about it. We sat in a park in Milano all afternoon. I gave him a lecture, and after I got through, he was kidding and said, 'How can you tell me anything? I've lived longer than you.' I said, 'You sure have, and you know more than I do.' He said, 'I sure do, so I'm doing it the way I want to do it.' He just got disgusted.

"Did you know when Don Byas worked with me—went to Japan and came to this country with me—he was making \$500 a week, right? When he went back home to Holland and he wasn't working, the government paid him \$500 a week. Do you mean to tell me a little country like that can subsidize their artists and this country can't? That's jive. That's why Don Byas became a Dutch citizen, carried a Dutch passport, spoke Dutch."

Art Blakey on recording: "We have that recording of Sonny Stitt and the Jazz Messengers coming. Columbia did more to make me known worldwide than any other record company." When pressed for details on his remarkable association with the Blue Note label, Blakey said, "That was a personal relationship. With Alfred [Lion] and Frank [Wolff] and Thelonious and Ike Quebec—that was a good family thing. I like Alfred and Frank very much, and I'm sorry they retired and then passed. They treated the musicians very fair, more than any other record companies at that time. They would pay the musicians for rehearsing; they would always have food there, and on the date, boy, we'd have a big party. They tried to show their appreciation. They never turned down a musician when he'd ask them for money. Alfred might do anything—he was just that way. My thing was different. I recorded whenever I wanted to. When we



HENRY J. KAHANEK

weren't working, if we were off two weeks, we'd go in the studio every day, stay all day, the cats got paid for it. I always kept my payroll on an even keel.

"We'd play the songs out on the road, we'd come on in and just play them. If we didn't like them, we'd change them around, rehearse, play them again. He was like that—he didn't rush around telling you about the costs of the studio—take your time, make good records. Ike Quebec was responsible for Alfred and them. They listened to what he said, because Ike knew the business. They'd question Ike before they'd record someone. They'd go around every night and listen to all the cats—every night. They'd catch a plane, come out to Chicago, and listen to some musicians—that's how they got John Gilmore and Clifford Jordan [see the *Blowing Sessions* twofer on Blue Note]. Johnny Griffin was a topnotch tenor player who had his own way of doing things, and he just would never come out of Chicago. He was working with me, so they got him to do those dates—they'd heard him before. I was lucky to get him in my band."

Finally, **Art Blakey on Art Blakey:** "I'm not a person of routine. That's why I'm playing music. I don't like getting up in the morning, going to work, coming home, all that's not life to me. When I visit the cats I was raised with—baldheaded, toothless, walking around on canes—I look at them and say, 'I'll see you.' I don't want to be around that shit. If you travel and change, that really keeps you on your toes, keeps you youthful and thinking. I got to travel, got to see my friends, I got people here I love and people over there I love. I can't sit down and stay in one town, I got to see them all. The whole world is like my family." **DB**



Euphonix MC Mix and MC Control: Desktop Integration

Euphonix has broken new ground with the introduction of MC Mix and MC Control, two sleekly designed Artist Series units that offer unparalleled control of your audio or video software right from the desktop.

Euphonix has entered the expanding world of desktop audio by putting the power of its EuCon technology into affordable, small-footprint DAW control units. Introduced in 2004, EuCon protocol allows hardware controllers to communicate directly with software applications over high-speed Ethernet. The first workstation controller to utilize the technology was the company's MC Pro, targeted at the professional audio, video and film industries.

Both the MC Mix and MC Control are designed with the desktop studio in mind, fitting perfectly in between your monitor and keyboard. "We looked at the ergonomics and setup of most DAW systems and developed a form factor that is easy to integrate with traditional analog consoles that have no DAW control," said Derk Hagdron, director of worldwide channel marketing for Euphonix. "The MC Mix and Control provide incredible control over your workstation software and are

incredibly effective on their own. However, all the Artists Series products are modular and can be linked together to create a custom console to suit your particular workflow needs."

The MC Mix is designed with mixing in mind and provides eight bankable motorized fader strips with LCD display, channel control knobs, navigational controls and other options in a sleek package no bigger than an extended keyboard. The MC Control offers total control over your application and has four bankable fader strips, a host of programmable buttons, a full-color touch screen and dedicated transport controls with a jog wheel.

I was ready to roll with both products after performing a quick software install and connecting the units with a standard Ethernet cable to my MacPro. (Currently, the MC Mix and MC Control are only compatible with Macintosh operating systems.) The EuControl software loaded on startup, and after launching Logic Pro 8, both units immediately configured themselves to my project with no additional setup needed. I could actually switch one unit off and the other would intelligently re-align itself to reflect the new hardware configuration.

ware configuration.

Euphonix got it right with EuControl, building the intelligence into the software and not the hardware. "EuCon is the star of the show," Hagdron said. "Without it we would have to use MIDI protocols that are outdated and fairly superficial." By providing access to things that are not even reachable with the mouse, EuCon protocol allows for a level of integration with software applications that has never been possible before. Another important advantage of EuCon is the incredibly high resolution of the MC Mix and MC Control's faders and knobs, which allow for extremely smooth and precise mixing and parameter adjustments.

The MC Mix and MC Control are state-of-the-art, professional-level products with a mind-boggling set of capabilities. Whether used individually or as part of a modular system, they offer accuracy, control and customization to your digital audio workflow and are nothing short of amazing.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: euphonix.com

Steinberg Cubase 5: Upper-Echelon DAW

One of the most popular DAW applications in the world is Steinberg's Cubase. It has long led the way in features and usability and has been cross-platform since 1992. Cubase was completely rewritten in 2002 as "Cubase SX" to improve stability and allow for easier updates, and since then, the major updates have been impressive—so how does version 5 improve upon an already very mature platform, and is it worth the upgrade price?

There are some nice improvements under the hood in version 5. It can now natively support Windows Vista 64, which allows you to use huge amounts of RAM. While it does not yet support 64-bit operation on OS X yet, they have "cocoa-ized" this version, which will

enable this to happen in a coming update as well as keep it running natively in future versions of the Mac OS. A new "Channel Batch Export" option allows you to export many tracks at once into separate audio files—anyone who has had to export for another DAW system knows how important this is.

Cubase 5 introduces a new concept called "VST Expression," which allows you to control multiple articulations of a sound source from a single MIDI track, sidestepping any issues with keyswitches. This makes using any of the large orchestral libraries a breeze, and can also be used to create incredibly interesting synthesizer tracks. They have also included a pitch manipulation system called



"VariAudio" that can be used for standard vocal corrections, but is robust enough for more interesting applications. While it may not be as intricate as the Celemony or Antares options, it is included in the DAW workflow, which makes it much easier to use.

Steinberg also added in a great set of tools

Sonare TRB-500/600, B&S eXquisite Trumpets: Responsive Horns

With renowned designer Cliff Blackburn's patented lead pipe design on all Sonaré professional trumpets since 2004, the brass and wind manufacturer began getting requests for a student horn that had some of the same components. The result is Sonaré's TRB-500 and TRB-600 intermediate trumpets, featuring Blackburn-designed signature lead pipes and the MicroLok valve system.

The MicroLok system sets the valve piston into alignment during the production process, then tightens it into place by a set screw. The alignment is permanent, but can be reset by a trained technician, without soldering. Cleaning and oiling will not disturb the setting. The difference is clearly noticeable: The horn slots beautifully, and even when you first play it, there's a fluidity, a smooth feeling of air moving through the horn that gives a singing feeling. With the TRB-500 model, I sometimes forgot I was playing on an intermediate horn.

While I expected the horn to play well in a concert band setting, I was pleasantly surprised when I popped a lead mouthpiece into the TRB-500 for a big band gig. It generated a brilliant lead sound. For a student horn to offer this kind of versatility allows easy participation in various aspects of the school's music program (concert band, orchestra or jazz ensemble), making it an excellent choice for a student musician. The TRB-500 and TRB-600 cost \$899 and \$999, respectively.



The new handcrafted eXquisite B♭ trumpet is a product of the cooperation between German instrument manufacturer B&S and prolific L.A. studio recording artist Malcolm McNab, whose motion picture soundtrack credits number more than 1,500. The trumpet (also available in the key of C) features a hand-hammered one-piece yellow brass bell with French bead flat rim nickel silver outer slides and a 11.3 mm bore.

Well balanced and lightweight, I expected a bright and brilliant sound from the eXquisite. Instead, the horn produced a surprisingly dark tone reminiscent of a much heavier trumpet.

It seemed counterintuitive: I've come to expect that aspects of flexibility and agility are naturally sacrificed when seeking a darker-sounding horn. But B&S has dispelled this myth by creating an instrument that handles like a jazz- or pop-oriented horn while producing a more traditional orchestral sound.

To counteract the medium bore of the eXquisite, I found myself wishing for a bigger mouthpiece, in an effort to emulate the more free-blowing horn to which I've become accustomed. The trumpet slots well, and intonation is very good in all registers. Overall, it sounds and blows like a heavier trumpet, but allows the freedom of movement like a lighter horn.

The remarkable agility of the eXquisite B♭ is highlighted on McNab's web site, where you can hear him play an excerpt of a transcription of a Tchaikovsky violin concerto arranged for trumpet. He starts from a low concert A and soars to the E-flat above the staff, and all the while the horn never loses its dark, centered quality and timbre.

—Mike Pavlik

» Ordering info: sonarewinds.com

» Ordering info: b-and-s.com



for groove and beat creation and manipulation. A new drum sampler called Groove Agent One is included with a few kits to start you off, but it can import Akai MPC files and sliced loops, as well as drag-and-drop functionality with WAVs and AIFFs from your hard drive. It has a clean and simple interface and

ize your grooves, and then drag the MIDI file directly to a track—it makes drum programming go much faster and easier. Lastly, there is LoopMash, which will randomly resequence any number of loops that you drag into it on the fly with various options for parameter shifts.

has dedicated controls for all the parameters you would expect on each pad. Beat Designer is a sophisticated step sequencer with multiple pattern slots. It makes it intuitive to human-

Added to these major enhancements are a long list of smaller ones, including full support for the VST3 spec, a nice convolution reverb plug called Reverence, a redesigned and optimized automation system, and an onscreen virtual keyboard. All of this adds up to a really great upgrade. There's something here for everyone, but Steinberg was still able to maintain the program's ease of use despite the plethora of new features. Version 5 is a worthy child of the venerable Cubase family, and should keep it in the top echelons of music production software for the foreseeable future. I highly recommend it as an upgrade, and as a great DAW for new purchasers.

—Chris Neville

» Ordering info: steinberg.net

1 Blissful Tone

Bliss vintage-style cymbals are the flagship line from Dream. Offered in even sizes, they are hand-hammered, microlathed plates with a low bridge and small but clear bells. Quite thin by modern standards, Bliss cymbals are exceptionally resilient and slightly soft on the stick. The undertones are warm and rich but never overpower the stick sound. Separation between stick sound and overtones is clear, and the pitch range is low and dark.

More info: dreamcymbals.com



2 New World View

PowersPercussion.com has released *Ritimista: Volume One*, the first in a new play-along series for world percussion. The CD consists of 11 rhythms found in a variety of African and Latin music styles—each is looped for about three minutes and is presented at two different tempos. Pianists, guitarists and non-percussionists can benefit from *Ritimista* as well by practicing montunos, comping, melodies and soloing over each track. A link to complete written notation is provided, allowing players to learn the drum, bell and clave rhythms contained on the disc.

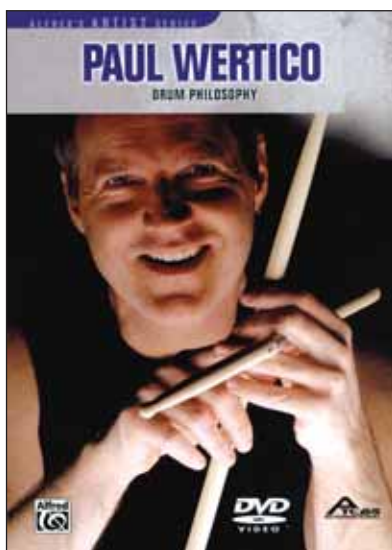
More info: powerspercussion.com



3 Going Mental

Alfred Publishing has added *Drum Philosophy*, with Paul Wertico, to its Artist Series of instructional DVDs. Wertico provides valuable insights into the philosophy he employs at the drum kit, an approach that is as much mental as it is physical. Topics include stick technique, soloing, ghost notes, practicing, listening and interacting. Also featured are in-studio ensemble performances of original songs, followed by in-depth discussion and analysis.

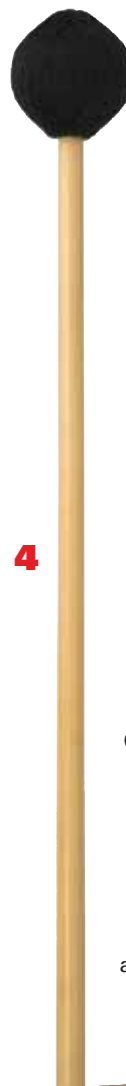
More info: alfred.com



4 Signature Mallet

Vic Firth has introduced the Ed Saindon Signature Keyboard Mallet, a medium cord mallet with rattan shafts designed to create a full sound with lots of color and exceptional clarity at all dynamic levels. You hear the low fundamental of the note as well as the definite attack, which aids in the clarity. With a weighted core and tightly wrapped cord, the mallet is versatile on vibraphone and marimba. It is suitable for jazz, classical, marching band and solo playing. MSRP: \$72.

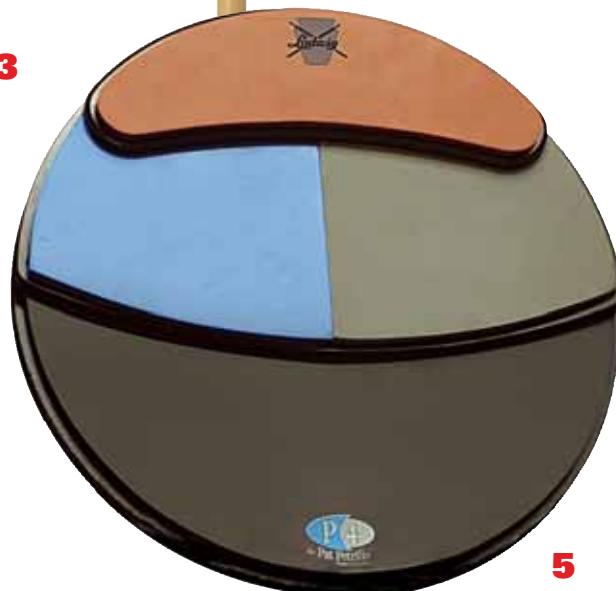
More info: vicfirth.com



5 Practice Surface

Ludwig's new Pat Petrillo LP4 Practice Pad is designed to strengthen and reinforce hand and wrist motion for all drummers. Offering three different playing levels and four different playing surfaces, the pad fits neatly on top of your snare drum, table top or lap. The LP4 can also be attached directly into the snare stand basket or on top of a cymbal stand. Each pad surface has a unique sound and feel, corresponding to the playing characteristics of different drums and cymbals.

More info: ludwig-drums.com



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MASTER CLASS
by Mat Marucci

Heel-Raise Bass Drum Pedal Technique

Good drummers know that when striking a drum with a stick, it is important to get the stick back off the drumhead as quickly as possible. There are exceptions to this rule, but it is the technically correct way to play, as it affords the drummer maximum tone and speed of motion. If the drumstick lays on the drumhead after a stroke, then it needs to move in two directions before it can hit the drum again: upward first, then back downward to the drumhead.

When playing the bass drum, it is equally important to get the beater back off the drumhead. However, many drummers leave the beater on the drumhead after it strikes the drum, which is known as burying the beater. This technique can be used to get a more deadened or muffled sound from the bass drum, but if tone and speed are desired, leaving the beater buried into the drumhead is counter-productive.

Most drummers play the bass drum using either the heel-down or heel-up technique. Some stay with one or the other, while some will use both techniques at various times. Usually the heel-down technique is used by drummers playing more jazz-oriented music, while the heel-up technique is used by those playing heavier styles such as r&b, rock, blues, funk, or whatever is the current pop style of the day.

Another difference in the two techniques is that most heel-down users will play from the ankle with the heel stationary on the drum pedal and the beater motion executed by the ball of the foot pushing down on the pedal. Most heel-up players will use the force of the leg stomping down on the pedal to facilitate the beater hitting the drumhead. There is a tremendous difference in the amount of mass that needs to be moved with each of these techniques. What's faster to move? An ankle or a whole leg? And which takes more effort? It is obvious that the heel-down technique will be faster, using less energy. It is also obvious that the heel-up technique will give more power but will tend toward the beater staying in the drumhead after the stroke.

The "heel-raise technique" can be used for both speed and power when needed. It allows the player to bury the beater if desired or let the beater come off the drumhead with as much power.

To begin, put your foot on the bass pedal as normal when using the heel-down method [see Fig. 1]. Next, lift your heel very quickly as high as you can. This will force the ball of your foot downward on the pedal footboard, making the beater hit the drumhead. Immediately after the beater hits the drum, while keeping the ball of your foot on the pedal, allow the beater to come back to its starting position. The ending position



will be with the heel in the air [Fig. 2]. Keep in mind that the ball of your foot will always have full contact with the footboard and remain on the pedal. Lifting any part of the foot off the pedal will inhibit control of the beater strokes.

Put the heel back down and do the technique again, always ending with the heel in the up position and allowing the beater to rebound off the head. After doing it a few times you will find that you can control where the beater stops with the pressure of the ball of your foot. You will also find that the harder and quicker you move the heel upward, the stronger the stroke will be and the more volume you will attain. It is very important that the beater rebounds off the drumhead and comes back to the starting position with your foot maintaining contact with the pedal at all times.

The next step is to do the same technique but only raising your heel half the distance [Fig. 3]. You won't develop as much power, but that isn't the point. Just have the beater come off the drum while controlling and stopping it with the pressure of the ball of your foot on the pedal.

When you can make the beater come to a complete stop with your heel in the halfway position, then move your heel upward from the halfway position to the original up position as in Figure 2. This should cause the beater to strike the drumhead again, getting a note with each motion: one note when moving to the halfway point and another note when moving from the halfway point to the full up position. When practicing this, be sure to have the beater come

to a complete stop at both heel positions. Then gradually shorten the amount of time between the two notes, stopping the beater for shorter and shorter periods.

Eventually it will become one smooth motion with the heel moving from the down position through the halfway mark to the up position, getting two notes in a row: one when the heel is at the halfway point and another when it is at the up position. Move the heel faster, and you will get a double-stroke sound with one heel motion. This is very similar to playing double strokes with a stick to get two notes with one motion.

The next step is to apply the same technique stopping the heel one-third of the way and getting a note. Then move to the halfway point, getting the second note and to the full up position for the third note. Again, smooth out the motion and you will play a triplet by moving the heel upward in one motion.

Finally, do the same thing with quadruplets. Stop the heel one-fourth of the way to get the first note, eventually moving the heel upward in four motions to get four notes using one smooth motion, and you can play 16th notes.

Being able to play doubles, triplets and 16ths with speed and power is enough in itself, but there is another facet that can be added to this technique. This is getting a stroke by bringing the heel downward from the up position. It is fairly easy. Simply put your heel in the up position and quickly bring it downward to the heel-down position. The beater will strike the drumhead and rebound back, with you controlling that rebound again with pressure from the ball of your foot on the pedal. By doing this you can get a stroke on the drum while putting your heel in the down position preparing to move upward.

For example, to play triplets, you would start with the heel down and move it upward two times, getting two notes: one at the halfway point and another when the heel is fully up. Then you bring the heel back down, allowing the beater to strike and rebound off the drumhead. This completes a triplet. To play triplets continuously, the heel motion would be up-up-down, up-up-down, etc. To play 16th notes continuously, the heel motion would be up-up-up-down, etc. By ending in the heel-down position, you are prepared for the next note or notes—single, doubles, triples, whatever your intention.

This heel-raise technique is very adaptable for double bass drums. For example, when getting two notes with each foot, a double stroke roll can be achieved. The technique can also be applied when playing paradiddles with double bass.

The heel-raise technique is not intended to be your main technique, but an optional technique to be added to the drummer's arsenal. It works extremely well when any type of multiple stroke is desired from the bass drum and is definitely preferable to using the more common heel-up, leg-stomping technique.

DB

Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Mat Marucci is a drummer and educator who has performed with Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, James Moody, Eddie Harris, Buddy De Franco, Les McCann and Pharoah Sanders. He has written several books on drumming for Lewis Music and Mel Bay Publications and has been an adjunct faculty member for American River College (Sacramento, Calif.) and The Jazzschool (Berkeley, Calif.). Visit him online at matmarucci.com.



Les Paul

By Frank-John Hadley

IN PRAISE OF A MASTER

American music lost a living icon on Aug. 13 with the death of Les Paul—guitarist, inventor, songwriter, entertainer and raconteur.

Days before his burial in Waukesha, Wis., about 50 of Paul's closest friends attended his wake at a New York City funeral home. Paul's trio—guitarist Lou Pallo, bassist Nicki Parrott and pianist John Colianni—played his 1951 pop hit "How High The Moon" and three more songs in homage. Afterwards, a gathering of guitarists, musicians and industry VIPs convened for a solemn reception in the Gibson Guitar Showroom. Among those paying their respects were Tony Bennett, Bucky Pizzarelli, Pat Martino, Al DiMeola, Frank Vignola, Jose Feliciano, Joe Satriani, Slash and Paul's godson, Steve Miller.

One of the mourners, Ron Sturm, owner of the Iridium jazz club, where 94-year-old Paul enjoyed a popular Monday-night residency for the past 12 years, found the bright edge around the dark clouds. "We're lucky to have known Les," he said, not long after the services. "The world was lucky to know him. Every time a guitarist picks up his guitar and plays a note, there is going to be some Les Paul in that forever. He lives forever."

It's hard to overestimate the impact that Paul made on our musical culture. "He is one of those rare figures, maybe the only one, whose fingerprints can be found in nearly every aspect of the way that music has been played, produced and listened to over the past half-century of recorded sound," said guitarist Pat Metheny, during a break from a recent recording session. "His contribution to the guitar itself literally changed everything, and his playing was influential not only for the great ideas and notes but in the way that he brought a high level of musicianship to a mass audience."

Anthony Wilson, on the road with Diana Krall, echoed Metheny: "Make no mistake, our world, especially for musicians and lovers of music, would be entirely different if this man had not chosen the path that he did."

Texan Eric Johnson remarked that "Les didn't only open doors, he completely created

new frontiers."

It's widely known that Paul made one of the first solid-body electric guitars. His prototype, known as "the log," didn't impress the Gibson guitar company in the early 1940s, but in 1952 Gibson debuted its Les Paul model, partly designed by Paul. Since then, of course, millions of guitars emblazoned with his name have been sold. Just as important to the course of popular music were Paul's inventions of multitrack recording, overdubbing and, among other electronic creations, phase-shifting.

Jazz-savvy bluesman Joe Louis Walker said he admired how Paul tied his genius to a fierce individualism. "He's what musicians aspire to be, to be able to call your shots, live on our own terms. Les was from that class. He's like a visionary. I don't mean to sound esoteric, but he's really deep."

Walker knew that Paul triumphed over all sorts of misfortune: an electrical shock in the early '40s that traumatized his nervous system; an icy 1948 car crash that badly fractured his arm (doctors set it permanently at an angle, allowing him to keep playing); life-threatening pneumonia, also in 1948; a long, hard fall from popularity; a messy divorce aired in public; a broken eardrum in the mid-'60s; quintuple-bypass heart surgery at the start of the '80s; arthritis that started up in the '60s and by the end of his life had crippled all but two fingers and a thumb, forcing him to learn the guitar all over again. "Perseverance, perseverance, perseverance," Walker intoned the words like a mantra. "If anybody's ever got through it, it's Les Paul."

Derek Trucks, who favors Les Paul guitars, said, "The thing that struck me the most when I found out Les had passed was, *that's* how you're supposed to live a life. He did it right. He had a house gig, he was still connected and he was still doing what he loved. I hope that at 70, at 80, God hope at 90, I can still be doing that. The last time I saw Les was at his 90th birthday show, at Carnegie Hall, and he was still wide-open, playing, humorous, sharp as a tack. He was just fearless."

For Paul, it was an affair of mind and heart. "I fell madly in love with the guitar," he told writer Jim Macnie in a 1997 *DownBeat* cover

story with Pat Martino. "When I got married, the first thing I told my wife was that I loved two things: her and the instrument. I have a way of communicating to people that I can't find in the English language, but it's in my guitar. You can't go down and buy rhythm, can't go and buy a sense of humor and you sure as hell can't buy perfect pitch at Sam Ash. But what you can do is play that guitar and express yourself." And he stuck to a personal creed: "What [I've] got to do is make the people happy."

Lester Polsfuss, a grandson of German immigrants, began his happy communicating (for pay, anyway) in 1928 at age 13. Playing hillbilly music, he assumed the name Rhubarb Red (a reference to his hair color) and found a receptive audience on the radio in Missouri. Traces of country music would always have a place in his style. Switching over to jazz and pop full-time, calling himself Les Paul from the mid-'30s on, he worked with his own trio, with Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians, with Bing Crosby, the Andrews Sisters, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, Nat Cole and Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic gang. Paul teamed up with singer-guitarist Mary Ford (his second wife) as one of the most successful acts of the pre-rock 'n' roll '50s. They had almost 40 hits, topped 10 million record sales and hosted a nationally broadcast television show.

All the while, Paul paid special attention to a certain guitarist in Europe. "Django Reinhardt was his big guy," said Bucky Pizzarelli, his longtime pal. "Les said Django was the best in the world—and he was right." Paul in fact tracked down the elusive Gypsy in Paris, and they met another time in New York. Curiously, he did not identify Reinhardt in an early '50s *DownBeat* Blindfold Test, awarding the song performance two stars. Paul later made amends, in a fashion, by paying for Reinhardt's gravestone.

In more recent years, Paul played to club-goers, first at Fat Tuesday's (1983-1995) then the Iridium, both in Manhattan, and not too long of a haul from his 29-room home in Mahwah, N.J. Lou Pallo was there for him the whole time, supplying rhythm guitar. (They had initially

worked together at a Jersey club called Molly's, where Paul launched his "comeback.") Pallo revealed that Paul was afraid of something: "He always wanted to be remembered as a guitar player, not just a guitar," he said.

In perpetuity, Paul has nothing to fear. There's no shortage of admiring guitarists keen on talking up his guitar artistry. Larry Coryell, using a slow cadence and placing careful thought behind each word, offered: "Les had it. He had it. The man knew how to make the guitar talk." Adrian Belew remarked that "Les could play so well, play so very fast, do all sorts of amazing runs and tricks that other people are still doing today." Pat Bergeson, part of Madeleine Peyroux's touring band, judged Paul to be "one of the most creative guitar players ever." Greg Nagy, of the Michigan roots band Root Doctor, might have spoken for three generations of famous and unheralded guitarists when he commented that "anybody who has ever played a trill, pull-off, hammer-on, slur, or any other plethora of techniques owes a debt of gratitude to Les Paul."

Bucky Pizzarelli first heard Paul play on a Chicago radio station decades ago. "It was spectacular," he said. "Les knew how to play the melody. His jazz playing has always had the melody in it. That's a trick that all the greats had, starting with Louis Armstrong. He syncopated the melody and then whenever he wanted to throw one of those beautiful runs in, he threw it in." Pizzarelli said he treasured the many times he worked with Paul, whether it was at Carnegie Hall or in a small backwoods lounge in New Jersey. "Les had a fine mind for anything that had to do with music. He'd present it better than anybody else. That's the only way I can explain it."

New Yorker Frank Vignola had many occasions, onstage and off, to check out Paul's fine mind. "Les was a master at playing a melody and getting an unbelievably great sound," he said. "I remember my first night playing with him. We were doing 'I'm Confessin'.' He played the first 16 bars and when it came to the bridge he looked over to me to play the melody. It was then I realized how thin my sound was. His tone was thick and big."

Paul's lyricism was very familiar to Pallo. "He would play 'Over The Rainbow,' and it was so pretty," he said. "He got the exact notes and timbre. It was so perfect."

Another New Yorker, Joel Harrison, heard Paul far less often than Pallo but was just as mesmerized. "The sound of his playing has a warmth and a very direct kind of ... how am I going to say this? ... the notes just *ping* out at you," he said. "They're very clear. They're very true."

Charlie Baty, now involved with Gypsy jazz after years swinging the blues with the Nightcats, said what he liked most about Paul on records was "the fact that his playing is exciting and that his sense of structure is different than a lot of people." He continued: "When I hear Les, I'm thinking that he's realizing the potential of the guitar. He's using open strings. He's using pull-offs and doing the things you can only do on the guitar so he's not playing the same kind of line that a horn player would play."

Bucky Pizzarelli's son, John, who grew up in New Jersey with Paul a neighbor, reported he was amazed by all facets of his playing, but was puzzled by something he hoped his chatty friend would clarify for him. "I've always thought that Les' guitar had a whole different sound than what the sound has become on the Les Paul guitars," he said. "But for Les, *that* was the sound the way it was supposed to be, like a hollow-body archtop guitar without the feedback so he could turn it up loud. So I asked him, 'How come those pickups on your guitar are a lot different from the ones on the Les Paul guitars they sell?' He only said, 'Oh, I got them at Radio Shack.'"

Duke Robillard said that he loved Paul and Ford's "New Sound" of the '50s—the direct result of Paul the perfectionist fiddling around countless hours with the electronic gear in the garage workshop of his home, then in Los Angeles: "Man, the way he used augmented chords and whole-tone scales and diminished scales and then multi-tracked them."

Vignola was similarly taken. "The amazing thing about those records was that it was all one-takes because it was sound on sound, so if he made a mistake in one of his overdubs he had to start all over from the beginning," he said. "There was such a high level of musicianship."

Coryell, who is older than baby-boomers Robillard and Vignola, heard



DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

"Mockin' Bird Hill" and other Paul-Ford tunes when they were hot property. "Like everybody else in my age group, there was no way to avoid Les Paul unless you were nowhere near a radio or record player in the '50s," he said. "He was part of our normal life, and when I got old enough to get interested in the guitar, my jazz guitar teacher said he had a record of Les playing before he started doing his multi-tracking stuff. So it was very instructive to hear this record and hear him play more or less normally. He could really *play* the instrument, and for a musician playing popular music, it was not unattractive."

Coryell recalled a mid-'60s session at Paul's home with trumpeter Doc Severinsen. "I was a little guitar speed-freak at the age of 23," he said, "and Les checked me out. I realized I had been 'regarded' by Les Paul, so that was a big thing for me." Over the decades, Paul was never in short supply of encouragement for established and aspiring musicians. Al DiMeola, one recipient, said, "Les was so supportive of me through the years. He became like a second dad to me. He was my dearest friend."

At the Iridium, one of the musicians Paul took under his wing was violinist Christian Howes. Paul called him up onstage many a night. "There was something about the presence Les had, the reassuring confidence that he projected," Howes said. "It helped the music come through. Everyone felt that from him, and that's why they played so well." Howes appreciated how Paul let a guest, famous or unknown, take charge of the song all the way through rather than have him do a short solo and then defer to someone else. Howes commented on Paul's playing: "If you sat and listened to him for a full night, you would hear a lot of amazing stuff. He wasn't just regurgitating the same ideas, he was being spontaneous, he was trying things and taking chances. It was really deep what he did."

Paul interacted well with the Iridium crowd—a mix of guitarists, curious tourists and staunch fans from all over the world who made yearly trips to New York because of him. "Les had audiences in the palm of his hand," said Howes. "He would always tell jokes. He was very witty. If somebody in the audience would call out to him, he always had a comeback very quick."

Monday nights at the club were also special for Vignola. "The thing that I will remember most about Les was his enthusiasm for music and performing and for meeting with people after the shows," he said. "He would stay sometimes until 2 o'clock in the morning to make sure that he was able to meet with every person who stood in line to meet him and take a picture. What a wonderful man."

Howes felt the same vibe. "He made every person feel like they were the most important in the world," he said. "You always felt like he really cared deeply about you."

Those who counted Paul as a friend knew him as a prankster. John Pizzarelli laughed when recalling one incident. "I had seen Les once on TV with Jeff Beck," he said. "Jeff was playing some real loud, raucous rock guitar, and Jeff was to his left. So, while Jeff was burning it up, Les pulled his plug out. I knew this whenever I got up on stage with Les, so I tried to stay away from him by getting on his other side. One time we were playing 'Undecided' when all of a sudden I heard one of my strings go EEEEE-eeeeee! Les was tuning down one of my strings!"

Paul was a true character, even when not trying to be funny. Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson spoke about a session he once did with Bruce Hornsby, Willie Nelson and country guitar great Grady Martin. "We recorded all day in Willie's studio and were finishing up when Willie said, 'Les Paul's coming in and we're going to cut some sides. His flight's delayed.' So, finally, in walks Les. We wave and say, 'Hey, Les, how ya'll doing?' He ignores us and walks right to our sound engineer and says, 'What's the slew rate on this board?' That's part of his genius."

Visiting from England, Martin Taylor had a memorable time at Paul's place, always cluttered with dozens of guitars lying around and stacks of old tape recorder equipment. "Les started making popcorn while talking to me about guitars," he said. "Then we sat down with a couple of guitars and started playing a lot of old jazz tunes together. Looking over his shoulder towards the kitchen, I saw that he hadn't put the lid on the popcorn machine and popcorn was starting to explode all over all over the room. I started saying, 'Hey, Les, the popcorn!' but he was so totally absorbed by what we were playing that he was completely oblivious to all this popcorn bouncing off the wall. I left his house later that evening with the sound of popcorn crunching under my feet."

Bucky Pizzarelli can regale you with stories about Paul for hours. "He used to stop by my house all the time because we were a few miles part," he said. "One day I played a record I made with Zoot Sims and Buddy Rich. I said, 'Les, I just got this in the mail. You gotta hear this thing!' Know what he does? He took it home with him! Another time, same thing. We used to talk shop about guitars a lot. I said, 'George Barnes just sold me this D'Addario guitar. You got to hear it.' He heard it, grabbed it and went home with it. He had it a full year. I had to call him and say, 'Les, give me that guitar, will you?' But Les said, 'No! I'll give you two Les Pauls for it.' I said, 'No! No way! I don't want to do that!'"

Shortly before his death, Pallo visited Paul in his hospital room. "We were reminiscing about all the times he had, and a priest walks in," said Paul's loyal friend. "As soon as he comes in the room, a fly does, too. The priest says, 'You got a fly in your room.' Les says, 'It wasn't here till you came in.' Les looks at me and says, 'He doesn't think that's funny.' And the priest didn't. Les just comes out with these funny things so fast."

With Paul gone, the Iridium is featuring "Les Paul Guitar Tribute Mondays." Each week sees a guest joining the Les Paul Trio. The talent pool includes Coryell, Vignola, Bucky Pizzarelli, Jose Feliciano, Stanley Jordan, Bernie Williams, Skunk Baxter and Slash. "I'm the leader of the show since I'm the oldest member," said Pallo. "I know all the songs."

Robillard has the "Wizard of Waukesha" on his mind. "Les meant so much to me that about six months ago I started working on a project as a dedication to him, not knowing he was going to leave us. I'm playing several guitars, using a bass player and recording it all in my home studio, the way Les would do it. I'm using Sunny Crownover on vocals. She is really able to catch the feel of the Mary Ford sound."

In eternal repose, Paul also makes strong, eloquent connections with Anthony Wilson—and who knows how many thousands of other creative, committed musicians. "I happen to be working on my own solo recording that involves the layering of different guitar parts," Wilson said, "something that seems almost silly in the light of his daunting achievements in this area. What has remained in my mind after listening to this master's beautiful recordings and watching old videos of him on You Tube is a sense of awe and inspiration and a wider awareness of what might be possible as I delve into my multi-tracked exploration."

Wilson concluded: "Thinking about the great Les Paul during these past days has made me both sad and joyful. How else to feel about a man who made such magnificent contributions to world culture in general?" **DB**



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FREDDY COLE DOES YOUR SONG

By Ted Panken

On a Sunday morning at this summer's Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, 78-year-old Freddy Cole, only a few hours removed from Saturday's midnight show, considered a question about retirement.

"No," the singer-pianist said. "No-no. No-no." He laughed, "Ha-ha-ha," like a descending triplet. "A lot of people ask that. My golfing buddies say, 'Man, when are you going to stop?' For what? To stay home and be miserable like you? Music keeps you alive."

It was the final day of Cole's 12-set, no-nights-off run at Hotel Brufani, a palatial villa that hosts the festival's high-profile acts, among them Wynton Marsalis, Roy Haynes, Cecil Taylor and George Benson, the latter on tour with his "Unforgettable Tribute to Nat 'King' Cole" project, which incorporated a septet and a 27-piece string orchestra. All of them dropped into the Sala Raffaello room to hear the maestro sing and play the Fazioli piano with his trio.

"Damn near all of Wynton's band was there," Cole said. "I played with them the day before Obama's inauguration at Kennedy Center. The kids came grabbing me, called me the old man."

"Cecil told me he hadn't seen me play since Bradley's," Cole continued, referencing the prestigious Greenwich Village piano saloon where he played nine separate week-long engagements between 1988 and 1991, and a week apiece in 1994 and 1995. "Carmen McRae, who was a very good friend, used to come there all the time. She loved one of my tunes called 'Brandy'—she'd say, 'Do my song.' I'd generally do it."

At Perugia, Cole performed Benny Carter's rueful "I Was Wrong," the Ella Fitzgerald-Ink Spots World War Two hit "I'm Making Believe," Cole Porter's insouciant "You're Sensational" and O.C. Smith's soulful flagwaver "On The South Side of Chicago," all of which are on his new CD, *The Dreamer In Me* (High Note). But no set was the same, and Cole treated the flow in a free-associative manner, imparting that even the most knowledgeable connoisseur of the Great American Songbook would be hard-pressed to call a tune that he doesn't know. His brain seemed analogous to a generously stocked iPod on continuous shuffle, with each sound file comprising a well-wrought arrangement complete with harmonized piano-guitar voicings, sectional call-and-response and shout choruses, each song rendered with such authority as to give the illusion that Cole

had sung it every day for the previous year.

"Once I start to play, things happen," he said. "Unless you stop me right then and there, I don't know what I'm thinking about. Once I see from the body language that people are into what we're doing, I'm home free. I can call whatever I want."

As an example, Cole noted that on the previous evening, "for the first time in quite a while," he performed "I'll Never Say Never Again," a 1935 chestnut that Nat Cole covered in 1950. The rendition was one component of a lengthy interlude, spontaneously triggered by a medley built upon "Tenderly," during which he conjured a suite of his big brother's good old good ones, segueing seamlessly from one to the next, evoking the elder Cole both in the timbre of his gravelly, septugenarian voice and his exemplary diction, never stiff or exaggerated. Cole imprinted each tune with the stamp of his own personality.

A master of the art of compression and release, he swung unfailingly, didn't scat and avoided extremes of tempo and register. Perched sideways on the piano bench, he wore an ambiguous smile, simultaneously eyeballing his sidemen and the audience. He accompanied his declamations with unfailingly supportive, hip progressions; counterstated them with precise, pithy, bop-tinged solos that blended vocabulary drawn from the lexicon of John Lewis, Red Garland and Erroll Garner; and phrased them with a bathos-free subtlety and unpredictable voice-as-instrument suppleness more akin to Billie Holiday, McRae and Shirley Horn than to his brother. The delivery, though, contained a panache and directness imbibed from such master male balladeers as Billy Eckstine and Joe Williams, both friends and mentors during his adolescence and young adulthood in Chicago. As the week progressed, the years dripped off his baritone, which grew more resonant and open.

"Their voices are exactly the same, but that's genetic," said singer Allan Harris, in Perugia to perform Nat Cole repertoire daily on an outdoor stage in the gardens that face the Brufani's entrance. "That's the way they were raised. Back in the day, the number one thing that a black entertainer needed to cross over into the white record-buying thing was that you could understand what the brother was saying. You had to speak the queen's language to perfection. Not only does Freddy do that, but he puts his own little soulful twist on it, more than his brother did. There's times



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where I prefer Freddy over Nat in that respect, because Freddy keeps the soul about him continuously through his performance.”

“With me, every song is a new song,” Cole said. “I don’t do them like everybody else does them. When I do seminars, I tell students about learning a song the right way—the way the composer wrote it. Then you do what you want.

“You’re not going to hear me scat, either. A lot of people who do that are good singers, but my way of thinking is that they have great musicians with them—let *them* play. To me, *baba-baba-daba-dop* don’t mean nothin’. We had two great scatters, and that’s Miss Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. After that, you could say Jon Hendricks and maybe Eddie Jefferson. They did it with taste and style. But now you have these younger singers who think that scatting makes them a jazz singer. Well, actually, what is a jazz singer? I have no idea. I would say Ella Fitzgerald was a jazz singer. Sarah Vaughan could sing anything, so they put the ‘jazz singer’ title on her. Carmen McRae was a great singer. But Carmen was a stylist, like Billie Holiday, and my brother, and Billy Eckstine. Lurleen Hunter, from Chicago. Johnny Hartman, who was a dear friend. You get a label put on you, like I say.”

It has been both Cole’s blessing and curse to be labeled “Nat Cole’s younger brother,” a descriptive to which, some decades ago, he penned the riposte “I’m Not My Brother, I’m Me,” which he sang ebulliently to transition into the final portion of his Saturday set. Indeed, as Harris pointed out, although Cole has drawn extensively on the Nat Cole songbook over the years on recordings, concerts and special projects (he duetted with Benson on “I’m Biding My Time” on Perugia’s main stage), such an extended homage is indeed a rare thing.

Harris pinpointed an occasion in 1977 at a club in Atlanta—Cole’s residence since 1970—when Cole responded to his “mistake of asking for a Nat Cole song” with precisely the same musical answer. “Freddy did that song strongly, and with verve, and he did it demonstratively,” Harris recalled. “Not like he does it now—happy and so on. He didn’t really say he wasn’t about to do any Nat King Cole tunes, but after he finished it was put to rest that you didn’t ask Freddy for any of his brother’s songs.”

“Before I started to play at Bradley’s, I was really ‘Nat Cole’s brother,’” Cole remarked. “That’s about as blunt as I can put it. Or I was a ‘cocktail piano player,’ whatever that is. You get tied into one of these corners, and that’s all you’ll ever be. It’s been a long, hard, worthwhile, fruitful struggle—what’s the use of crying about it now?”

My brother was quite a man. I always say I’d rather be 10 percent of the man that he was than an entertainer. If he or my father said something, or gave you their word, that was it. I try to be that way. With all the years I’ve been out here, nobody can say that I didn’t pay anybody, that I ran out on a hotel bill.”



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The *Dreamer In Me* is Cole's fifth recording for High Note in the past five years, and his 11th collaboration with producer Todd Barkan, who first recorded Cole in 1993 on his breakout release, *Circle Of Love*. His emergence over the past two decades from "Nat Cole's younger brother" to the international stature of his golden years is one of the great second acts in the annals of show business.

"Besides Tony Bennett, Freddy is one of the last vestiges of that era where front men told a story with the song through the voice," Harris said. "He's an older gentleman now, and his voice may not be as clear as it was 25 years ago, but his delivery is far beyond anyone younger than him. Freddy takes you on a magical journey. You forget about vocal styling. You forget about smoothness. He's a master at what he does, and he doesn't have to impress anyone. Most vocalists, including myself, take a whole song to get our point across. Freddy does it in one phrase. From all the years he spent in clubs, touring the world and studying the American songbook, he completely understands where the composer is coming from, and stays true to it."

Cole offers insight into the formation of his esthetic in rendering O.C. Smith's paean to the time "when jazz was king on the South Side of Chicago" with "all those little honky tonk joints, filled with people glowing while the cats was blowing." Early on, when the family lived at 57th and Michigan Ave., he met Chicago's prime movers and shakers through his brothers—not only Nat, but also Eddie Cole, a bassist and successful bandleader who had played in Europe with Noble Sissle, and singer-pianist Ike Cole ("he could flat-out play"), whose career consisted primarily of long-haul hotel gigs. He began to play with the local luminaries towards the end of the '40s after graduating from Waukegan High School, where his promising football career—he was an all-state halfback as a junior—abruptly ended after a tackler stepped on his hand, causing a bone infection that led to a 21-month hospital stay.

"The medical term for it was 'tuberculosis arthritis,'" Cole said. "My brother brought in a specialist from California. I had three operations in the same hospital, but instead of stitching it all up, they drained the bone. It had to heal. Every day for so many hours, I'd sit with this concoction that they put me in. Playing piano was therapeutic—it kept the flexibility in the wrist."

Cole entered the trenches at 17, when trumpeter King Kolax, whose bands were a rite of passage for several generations of Chicago musicians, hired him for the piano chair. "I was struggling to keep up with the other musicians," Cole said. "I was young and dumb. We thought we were hip. We thought we were playing bebop."

After a four-year apprenticeship around Chicago while attending Roosevelt College, Cole moved to New York in 1953 for a semester at Juilliard, spent 1955 and 1956 at New

England Conservatory and moved back to New York in 1957. "I was playing jazz music before I got to school, and it was difficult to try to fit into this other mold," he said. "If somebody came through with a gig, I'm out of there! Then I've got to go back and catch up. But I'm competitive. I'm a fighter. I will give out before I give up. Looking back, I wish I'd applied myself more. But I did what I had to do, and got my degree."

He remained in New York for 13 years, moving to Atlanta in 1970. "That's when I was learning how to do everything," Cole said. He worked the East Side supper clubs and steakhouses, "joints with the crooked-nose guys" and "corner taverns and bars in the outer boroughs." He remembered an early gig with ex-Ellington drummer Sonny Greer. "He would hold court every day at Beefsteak Charlie's, where you'd see all the old-timers. Sonny told me, 'Little Cole, you've got to learn how to be a storyteller.' When you're a little kid listening to the teacher read, he said, she'd have you believing that story if she was really good. It took a while to get to what Sonny was trying to tell me. It really hit home when I was in Brazil in 1978—Brazilian singers sing as if they're singing directly to you."

There were other lessons. "Without saying it, most of those clubs were run by 'the fellas,'" Cole said with a chuckle. "Some would be set up for a late-night thing when they would all meet later in the evening, so you had to learn the 'Set 'Em Up, Joe' type songs. Unrequited love. Then you played clubs where it's nothing but swinging, and some clubs where it was dancing. It was a total learning experience about how to play, what to play and when to play it."

It was evident from Cole's forthcoming itinerary that he is as old-school in his "make the gig at all costs" attitude to road life as in song interpretation. Perugia was the last stop of a European sojourn that began with engagements in Switzerland and Slovenia. He would resume his travels five days hence across the pond with a rapid-fire succession of East Coast bookings before resuming his rolling-stone-gathers-no-moss lifestyle with various autumn travels.

"Freddy is invincible," said Randy Napoleon, his guitarist. "The schedule in this band is more difficult than anything else I've done. We've done tours where we were out for weeks, traveling every day, getting up at 4:30 in the morning, driving two hours to the airport, catching a flight, maybe transferring and catching another flight—and then hitting. Or you drive nine hours in a van, and then get up and work that night. Freddy loves it. His famous quote is, 'Let's go.' I'm a young man, I'm in good shape, but I'll be bleary-eyed. Four to five hours of sleep, Freddy's gone."

"I'm like an old penny," Cole said. "I turn up anywhere. That's what I've done throughout my years in the business. I don't look at myself as a so-called star. I'm just plain Freddy. That's all you can be."

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John Patitucci

At the Crossroads of Melody, Rhythm and Harmony

By Dan Ouellette

The word “prolific” leaps to mind when considering John Patitucci’s recent jazz contributions, whether he’s serving as a support-team member for a range of musicians or leading his own projects. Accomplished on the double bass as well as the six-string electric, no bass player has been more in demand of late. In the past year alone, Patitucci went high-flying on the road with Wayne Shorter as the anchor and co-rudder of the saxophonist’s otherworldly quartet, imaginatively filled the bass chair in Roy Haynes’ sparkplug trio and performed dynamic double-duty with Joe Lovano at the Monterey Jazz Festival on the saxophonist’s gig with Hank Jones and his trio project featuring Brian Blade.

On this year’s recording front, Patitucci co-starred with old friend Jack DeJohnette on the drummer’s luminous *Music We Are* trio CD (also with Danilo Pérez) and buoyed Edward Simon’s *Poesia* CD (another triad outing with Blade). In addition, Patitucci played the leader card for the first time since 2006’s *Line By Line*, delivering the outstanding CD *Remembrance*, a collection of 11 originals paying creative tribute to jazz legends in yet another trio setting (Lovano and Blade, as well as a few guests augmenting the affair).

At a North Sea Jazz Festival panel discussion with Patitucci in July, he talked about how his career as a sideman has impacted his role as a leader, which officially launched while he was with Chick Corea. “You learn from people you work with,” he said. “Over the years I’ve had the privilege to apprentice with a lot of older musicians, masters like Chick and Wayne. From their example, they taught me to choose guys who are going in a direction and give them space to become a grander version of who they already are versus hiring a musician and trying to change them.

That kind of micromanaging never works. I’m a composer. I’ve been writing music since I was 12. When I look for musicians to work with, I want to find people who will have fun putting their own stamp on my music.”

Case in point: Patitucci’s all-star trio, whose first-take chemistry captured on *Remembrance* translated brilliantly into a live setting at Dizzy’s Jazz Club in New York this summer. You could hear the shouting onstage—gleeful, provocative, even flabbergasted in the wake of extemporaneous surprise—as Patitucci piloted his fellow top-flight improvisers, focusing point-blank on performing *con brio*.

While Lovano reserved his expressions of exhilaration to his saxophone gusts (no hollers, just arched eyebrows as he moved to the side of the stage to survey the rhythm-team interaction), both Patitucci and Blade yelped at various junctures of the full-steam-ahead set. “Believe me, it’s not contrived when we start yelling,” said Patitucci, who also smiled, laughed and danced his way in step through the set. “We’re not thinking about anything when we play together. We just react. It’s an act of throwing something out there and seeing what will happen. I get excited when I wonder what these guys will do with my music. I hand it to them and let them run with it. As the bandleader, it’s great to be playing with people who are interested in telling stories to move people, to inspire them.”

He added, in deference to his longstanding sideman relationship with Shorter (beginning in 1986), “Wayne says that what he does is like making a movie that you get swept up into. He’s not about, hey, look at me; look what I can do. He believes that our quartet with Brian and Danilo is a collective where each person tells stories and moves the music. It’s like a community, or as Brian calls his band, a fellowship.”



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- Neil Tesser (from the liner notes)



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Nearly a quarter-century ago in 1985, Patitucci fully broke onto the scene thanks to Corea, who enlisted him into both his Akoustic and Elektric bands. Patitucci had a steep learning curve ahead of him, not only as a player faced with negotiating the turns of challenging material but also as an improviser performing alongside a master of comping. "Chick was such an inspiration," Patitucci said. "He believed in my talent, and he was extremely supportive of my compositions. He encouraged me to put my own band together. I felt so busy as a sideman with him that I never thought of myself as a leader. But Chick prodded me. He got me my first record deal."

Patitucci's self-titled debut was released in 1988 on GRP; his fourth CD, *Heart Of The Bass*, arrived in 1992 as the first non-Corea album to be issued on the pianist's own Stretch label.

Another early association was Michael Brecker, who encouraged the New York-born but California-based bassist to move back East to his upstate neighborhood in 1996. At North Sea, Patitucci discussed the rousing tune "The Mean Time" from Brecker's final CD, *Pilgrimage*, where the support team included Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock and DeJohnette. "In that piece I felt that my job was to lay down the time," he said. "I could play loose, but I tried to make the markers. Jack is really loose and needs to be able to color. Mike loved Jack playing dense like that. And Mike would play something that triggered Jack to launch like a rocket ship. So I had to make sure everything was grounded—but with a light touch, not authoritarian so that people could still stretch out, go crazy, go out on a limb, but know that I was always there to keep control."

Another drummer with whom Patitucci has been associated is Roy Haynes, who asked him and Pérez to tour as a trio on the festival circuit in 1998. The dates proved to be so fruitful that they went into the studio and recorded *The Roy Haynes Trio* (released in 1999). "Playing with Roy is always like going to rhythm-section finishing school," he said. "You learn so much, especially about the physicality of playing rhythm. Roy plays with his whole body, not just his hands and feet. He's head to toes. For me, this is a huge deal." Patitucci also marveled at how fortunate he was to be playing with an artist who embodies the entire history of modern jazz. "Roy is the link between generations. He played with all my jazz heroes—Trane, Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Bird, Miles—and his rhythm is still as firing and crisp as it was in the beginning."

While Patitucci's resume teems with sideman duties with jazz masters, he also picks and chooses dates with creatives whom he admires but may not be as well-known. He has been instrumental in Edward Simon's development as a pianist and bandleader, appearing on two of his remarkable trio dates with Blade, 2006's *Unicity* and this year's *Poesia*. As Patitucci listened to the six-string electric bass tune "One For J.P." from *Poesia*, which Simon wrote in his honor, he laughed: "That's what happens when someone writes a song for you. It's always hard to play. Ed writes challenging music. There are some odd bars in this one, but Brian is so comfortable playing any style of music that he makes it feel like he's working on a straight groove."

Simon explained that he loves playing with Patitucci ("one of the most complete musicians I've had the pleasure of working with") because of his unbridled and almost childlike enthusiasm. "It feels liberating to play with someone like John because you know that no matter what direction you may decide to go he is always right there ready to support you or perhaps lead you," Simon said. "He knows how to interact in a rhythm section and yet is a strong soloist. Being an accomplished composer himself, John knows how to bring out the details in a composition or arrangement that make it stand out."

At the end of the North Sea session, Patitucci listened to the danceable classical-meets-funk "Messiaen's Gumbo" from *Remembrance*. He smiled and explained how the tune was based on classical composer Olivier Messiaen's modes of limited transposition. "This is based on the third mode, which intrigued me," he explained. "I decided to write a snaky line and run it over a New Orleans sensibility. I was real curious to discover what the mix would sound like."

At Dizzy's a month later, the trio lit into the piece with Patitucci on electric six-string leading the way. He opened his solo with guitar-like

runs, and then was joined by Blade's loud clash. Lovano waited, watching the ebb and flow of conversation between the two rhythm aces, and then joined in with angular blasts. Patitucci kept the improvisational fury alive by instigating new routes of exploration.

For Patitucci, the trio project was a dream-come-true session that took him nearly eight years to pull together. He had first assembled Lovano and Blade for a quartet tune on his 2001 *Communion* album, which also featured Brad Mehldau. Because the pianist was unavailable for a rehearsal due to scheduling conflicts, the bassist, saxophonist and drummer got together as a trio just to try the music on for size. "What a treat that was and an experience I can never forget," Patitucci said. "The feeling was mutual, and we talked about doing something together, just the three of us, someday."

Because of busy calendars, the trio idea was shelved. But as Patitucci approached his 50th birthday, he decided the time had come to open up some schedule windows. Still, he had doubts. "It was a little daunting to me," he said. "I looked at a trio date like Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Suite* with Oscar Pettiford and Max Roach [in 1958], and thought, does the world need another trio record? They were all our shining beacons. But we decided to have some fun—three improvisers of this generation playing some of my music."

Arguably Patitucci's strongest CD, *Remembrance* pays homage to his musical heroes, including passed jazz titans (the bouncing, joyful sendoff to Freddie Hubbard, "Blues For Freddie") and beyond-jazz greats (such as the cooking number "Mali," dedicated to the late Malian guitarist Ali Farka Toure). The CD features the leader designing the eclectic compositional architecture and providing the rhythmic authority



on both acoustic and electric basses. Highlights include Lovano dancing with tenor sax through "Sonny Side" (a bow to Rollins) and Blade fascinating throughout, instigating the rhythmic drive.

Backstage after the set at Dizzy's, Lovano said that he appreciated the freedom of expression that Patitucci afforded in his music. "John wrote with that in mind," he said. "He wanted to keep things open so that we could feed off each other. It opened up a lot of opportunity to be creative. He understands how valuable it is in a trio setting to share the space, to choose tunes that will work in the trio concept."

Back at North Sea, after the panel session, Patitucci was ready to head to another venue in the festival's labyrinth of performance spaces to set up shop with Haynes and pianist Dave Kikowski (subbing for

Pérez, who was home recuperating from a ruptured Achilles tendon). He considered the importance of an instrumental role that's typically viewed as less than glamorous. "One of the most exciting things as a bassist is that you are at the crossroads of the melody, rhythm and harmony," he said. "You're at the center. You're right in the middle of the music. I tell my students, we have to be able to give people the whole tune, to make people recognize it even if the pianist isn't playing it. You're playing bass but you're also composing in the moment, developing bass lines that have sturdiness and integrity."

It's this penchant for composition that has jettisoned Patitucci to the head of the bass class, a step beyond merely giving the music its gravity. "You go back in musical history, way before jazz, and see how musicians like Bach developed beautifully crafted bass lines," he said. "It all comes down to seeing yourself as a composer, crafting lines that can be grasped."

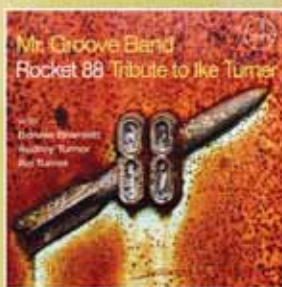
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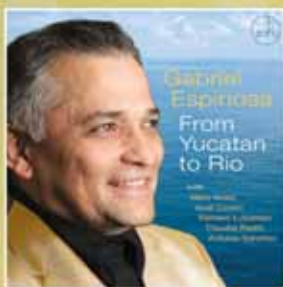
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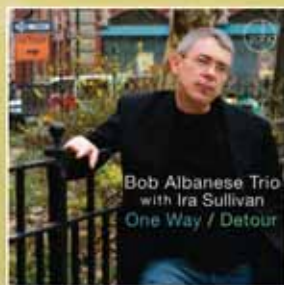
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CHRIS SCHMITT PHOTOGRAPHY

Roy Hargrove Big Band

Emergence

GROOVIN' HIGH/EMARCY B0013289

★★★½

If Roy Hargrove's music boasts a signature trait, it's probably swagger. As a soloist the trumpeter has made a point of embracing audaciousness and authority, and the heroes he cites, from Dizzy Gillespie to Clifford Brown, are from the "solid sender" school—guys who like to wail. So when Hargrove put together his big band a decade or so ago, it had a pointed bravado. From their home at New York's Jazz Gallery, they bounced through the energetic tunes, crashing the limits of their charts as often as following their directions.

That rambunctiousness marks the group's first CD. Hargrove, who's had more than a passing interest in Afro-Cuban music over the years, hits the gas during "Mambo For Roy," a hopped-up riff tune that Chucho Valdés donated to their book. As the boss takes his solo, the

action erupts and an explanation spills forth. This is a player's program just as much as it is an ensemble effort. Time and again, band members step forward for a moment in the spotlight. With the exclamation of the arrangement nudging him on, it's a wildly passionate Bruce Williams who roars through an alto solo on "Requiem"; and the Vincent Chandler trombone storm that follows is equally animated. Hargrove likes his teammates to have their say, sanctioning flourish after flourish. Even the ballads sound brawny.

An oddity: The music sometimes seems anachronistic. Compared to the flurry of progressive big bands doing business these days (John Hollenbeck, Darcy James Argue, Matthew Herbert), the group's adherence to standard swing motifs winds up flaunting some well-worn conventions. From the readymade shuffle "Ms. Garvey, Ms. Garvey" to the routine romp through "September In The Rain," there are moments when the designs could use a shot of something a tad more unique. (And isn't time

to declare a moratorium on "My Funny Valentine"?) Large ensembles led by Joe Henderson and Charles Tolliver have both found ways to avoid the obvious while embracing a trad blues vocabulary. The writing on *Emergence* is a bit lackluster.

That said, team Hargrove gets over on craft and spirit. If ever a leader imbued his art with the essence of his own personality, it's this dude with this band. I guess swagger, lined with lyricism and fueled by fierceness, is still a power booster.

—Jim Macnie

Emergence: Velera; Ms. Garvey, Ms. Garvey; My Funny Valentine; Mambo For Roy; Requiem; September In The Rain; Everytime We Say Goodbye; La Puerta; Roy Allan; Tschpiso; Trust. (70:04)

Personnel: Roy Hargrove, trumpet, flugelhorn, vocal; Frank Greene, Greg Gisbert, Darren Barrett, Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpets; Jason Jackson, Vincent Chandler, Saunders Sermons, trombones; Max Siegel, bass trombone; Bruce Williams, Justin Robinson, alto sax, flute; Norbert Statchel, Keith Loftis, tenor sax, flute; Jason Marshall, baritone sax, flute; Gerald Clayton, piano; Danton Boller, bass; Saul Rubin, guitar; Montez Coleman, drums; Roland Guerrero, percussion; Roberta Gambarini, vocals.

» Ordering info: emarcy.com

Grant Stewart

Plays The Music Of Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn
SHARP NINE RECORDS 1044

★★★★½

If Grant Stewart were a nuclear missile, we'd all be dead. Such is his history of flying undetected beneath the proverbial radar for nearly 20 years. And if a tidy, well-groomed virtuosity and a solid assurance were the stuff of stardom, he would be a regular Critics Poll hog by now. But we're all alive, and stardom evidently has other priorities.

So here I am meeting Stewart now, after about 20 missed CDs (four under his name), and feeling dereliction in my radar. By way of placing him in his proper universe in the way critics do, I will call on other players perhaps more familiar to serve as adjectives. He would fit in easily wherever the likes of Harry Allen, Scott Hamilton and Ken Peplowski are found today; or where Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, or Sonny Rollins might have been found a couple of generations ago in their salad days. Yes, even Rollins, whom I heard on a recent reissue of some of his early '50s Prestige sides with Miles Davis when they all swung with such a concise precision.

But everyone has done precision now, I suppose, and moved on to less impounded frontiers to find individuality. Stewart's charm is that he hasn't moved on, or at least not that far. He is more or less a custodian of the classic tenor vocabulary, and an unusually fine one with a straight, rich sound, light on vibrato, and a phrasing that flows in tight, crisp lines. He



works here in a standard quartet setting that is of the same swing-to-bop mind.

If one is of a pedantic bent, it's possible to infer fleeting references of familiarity, real or imagined: say, Lockjaw Davis as Stewart skips like a stone over the ultra fast "It Don't Mean A Thing;" or Coleman Hawkins' swagger as he chugs through "The

Feeling Of Jazz." Feel free even to hear whiffs of John Coltrane in "Angelica" from the Duke Ellington-Coltrane Impulse! session, though Stewart shoots through it with a graceful aplomb while Trane probed and dug. And there are the little winks to bebop at the entrance and exit to "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart."

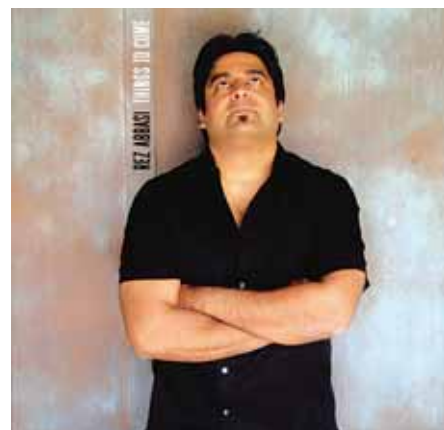
But none of this is doted upon or made to preen. In this salute to Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, it all fuses in a cohesive weave that is neither retro nor assertively contemporary. If your threshold of surprise requires a jarring iconoclasm or subversive counter-intuitiveness, you won't find it in Stewart's tenor. The surprises are unannounced, small and concealed in the familiar, although in choosing the material Stewart has taken a few lesser-traveled roads in the Ellington songbook. But they provide him with a lively ride.

—John McDonough

Plays The Music Of Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn: Raincheck; Tonight I Shall Sleep; Angelica (a.k.a. Purple Gazelle); I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart; It Don't Mean A Thing; Something To Live For; The Star Crossed Lovers; The Feeling Of Jazz. (59:23)

Personnel: Grant Stewart, tenor saxophone; Tardo Hammer, piano; Paul Gill, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

» Ordering info: sharpnine.com



Rez Abbasi

Things To Come

SUNNYSIDE 1236

★★★★½

If you wanted to make a case for the new Indo-Pak jazz cartel, this record would make a perfect Exhibit A. Not only is its leader, guitarist and composer of Pakistani heritage (born there, raised in L.A.), but it includes the scene's two most prominent figures, alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa and pianist Vijay Iyer. But what makes *Things To Come* a prime piece of evidence is that it really doesn't sound like it's trying to put too sharp a point on its ethnic particularity. It's too natural to be that heavy-handed.

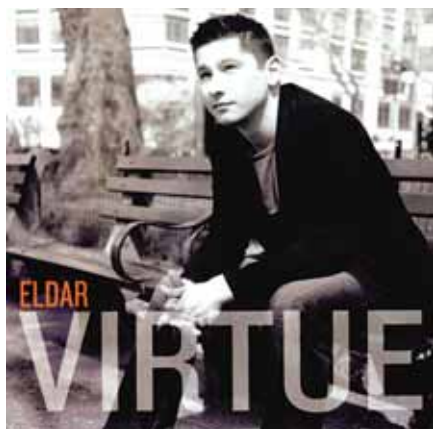
The logic of a South Asian music crossover with jazz is clear. They arguably represent the two most developed improvising systems in world culture. The challenge, since the period of the initial Indo-Jazz Fusion experiments in the '60s, has been to find a more integrated way to explore the musics' commonalities. Abbasi is extremely successful in this pursuit. He's an outstanding instrumentalist, no question, but the

Eldar

Virtue
MASTERWORKS JAZZ
88697-46236

★★★★

Virtuosity can be a curse, often leading to congestion, exhibitionism and plain bad taste. Eldar Djangirov, the Kyrgyzstan-born pianist who used to regularly dazzle crowds at



the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival while still in his early teens, started out life as most prodigies do: a flurry of characters in search of an author. Now 22, Eldar (who goes by his first name only) is finding an expressive

voice of his own, but his still-dazzling chops often take him on extraneous excursions.

Eldar describes *Virtue* as a "soundtrack" for his recent life in New York and, indeed, it reflects the manic whirlwind of that city by day, as well as some of its tender night moods. The main ingredients are knotty, driving, rhythms; pulsing vamps; rhapsodic East European pyrotechnics; and scream-

ing solos on both acoustic and electric keyboards (sometimes with one hand on each) that careen like kites in a hurricane. It's not always a pleasant sound—a throbbing, electric bass-driven power trio that depends more on fitful

energy, zigzag changeups and crescendos than logical musical development, with solos that feel more episodic than narrative. Ironically, the ballads, unadorned and played with extraordinary feeling, outshine the high-energy cuts.

Of the up-tempo tunes, Eldar hits closest to the mark with "Long Passage," an insinuating vamp that really gets under your skin. His acoustic solo, unfolding as a series of bursts and fleet runs, tells a real story, with bassist Armando Gola at one point coming way down, leaving the piano naked; on electric, Eldar is jubilant. "Daily Living," with a bumble-bee-flight theme recalling classical rhapsodies, has some of the same strengths, combining tenderness with throbbing, though it devolves into thick vamps and anthemic nonsense. Elsewhere, the up numbers feel over-energized (though I like the urgent 7/4 vamp of "The Exorcist") with Eldar ripping crisp, flying-finger runs for lack of anything better to do.

The HOT Box

framework for the playing here is what really catches my ear. With great ease Abbasi creates arrangements with parts in overlapping but different rhythmic cycles, keeping them light and airy so they don't obscure one another. The result, on a track like "Hard Colors," is a constant set of shifting relationships between the fixed elements, which becomes a springboard for improvisations.

Whether on resonant, steel-string acoustic or compact-toned, rather compressed electric, Abbasi's playing is a pleasure. His little duet with Indian vocalist Kiran Ahluwalia (who also sings on three other tracks) on the title track offers one very intriguing version of the possible hybrids, with unusual, evocative harmonic hues. The linear ideas on tracks like "Why Me Why Them" and "Insulin" remind me a bit of some of Henry Threadgill's writing, especially when articulated by Mahanthappa. His alto playing is out front here and there, as on the impassioned "Realities Of Chromaticism," and his playing always takes things up a notch.

Iyer is expert at finding the most unusual rhythmic morsels in a piece. He's got an ability to manage the thunderous chording left hand without having it plod, which is a hazard; hear him manage it with a Prokofievian flair on "Dream Suite." But *Things To Come* is a group realization of a very ambitious batch of compositional notions, and it's the band that brings it home. Bassist Johannes Weidenmueller and drummer Dan Weiss are evanescent, but gravitational, just the ticket for these tricky turns.

—John Corbett

Things To Come: Dream State; Air Traffic; Hard Colors; Things To Come; Why Me Why Them; Within Sanity; Realities Of Chromaticism; Insulin. (58:46)

Personnel: Rez Abbasi, guitar; Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto saxophone; Vijay Iyer, piano; Johannes Weidenmueller, bass; Dan Weiss, drums; Kiran Ahluwalia, vocals (2, 3, 4, 6); Mike Block, cello (2, 7).

» Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

By contrast, the pianist's original ballad "Iris" is flat-out gorgeous, as is the rippling romance of his "Lullaby Fantazia." His edition of the classic ballad "Estate," untouched by virtuosity, feels like it comes straight from the heart.

When Eldar started out he sounded like another Oscar Peterson, which was dismaying, of course, since the world already had an Oscar Peterson. Kudos to Eldar, then, for seeking his own voice. If he can keep his own fingers out of his way, he likely will find it.

—Paul de Barros

Virtue: Exposition; Insensitive; Blues Sketch In Clave; Iris; The Exorcist; Lullaby Fantazia; Blackjack; Long Passage; Estate; Daily Living; Vanilla Sky. (69:45)

Personnel: Eldar, piano and electric keyboards; Armando Gola, electric bass; Ludwig Afonso, drums; Joshua Redman (1), Felipe Lamoglia (3, 7, 8), tenor saxophone; Lamoglia, soprano saxophone (11); Nicholas Payton (7), trumpet.

» Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

CDs »	CRMCs »	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Roy Hargrove Big Band <i>Emergence</i>		★★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★
Grant Stewart <i>Plays The Music Of Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn</i>		★★★½	★★★★	★★★½	★★½
Rez Abbasi <i>Things To Come</i>		★★½	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★
Eldar <i>Virtue</i>		★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Roy Hargrove Big Band, *Emergence*

Great idea! Roy with big band. Exhilarated by Hargrove's kick-off original, "Valera," absolutely knocked out by Max Siegel's stunning arrangement of "My Funny Valentine" and delighted to hear Roberta Gambarini sing anything, I experienced mood swings due to crazy variety of material (and arrangers), with Frank Lacy's bombastic "Requiem" tipping the balance to a profound "Oh, well." —Paul de Barros

A drab start. Then a beefy big band blues that promises Hargrove his best CD showcase in years. Alas, the next nine tunes don't exactly constitute legal breach of promise, merely a somewhat missed opportunity. It's good, Roy plays like a pro, and Gambarini is lovely. But little zip. —John McDonough

Hargrove's is a tight big band: honed, precise, hefty. Emphasis on variety serves the program well. Dig the epic "Requiem," the bright, bluesy "Ms. Garvey, Ms. Garvey," the slinky "Trust" and the perky Latin changeup "La Puerta." The r&b infusions on "Roy Allen" almost work, but in the end feel like a misstep. —John Corbett

Grant Stewart, *Plays The Music Of Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn*

Some tenor players just have it, whatever "it" is, and you can hear it from the first note. Stewart's got a brilliant delivery, booting and bustling with ideas, also deploying restraint, on this forcefully mainstream, hard-swinging date. Lovely dedication, nothing untoward. —John Corbett

Lovely, easy flow of ideas, warm tone and great feel for laying behind the beat from this tenor traditionalist (as in Hawk and Pres, not Trane and Sonny). But there's something slightly enervated about Stewart's approach that makes me not want to really rush back to it. —Paul de Barros

He becomes more and more impressive as that fat tenor tone deepens—and it's really blossomed in the last few years. The Ellingtonia program is a nice fit with the Bean & Pres lingo the saxophonist is fascinated with, making this disc one of his most enjoyable. —Jim Macnie

Rez Abbasi, *Things To Come*

Basically a fusion set with an Indian paint job. Abbasi's undisputed talents take a back seat to Vijay Iyer's slinking, spidery lines, which exude pure intellect. Rudresh Mahanthappa's stone cold alto and drilling attack slip into the irksome epileptic spasms that have stalled the avant garde for decades. —John McDonough

The guitarist creates little puzzles for his team to solve, and the lyricism they bring to their collective efforts makes the process both enjoyable and fascinating. The syncopation, kinetics and swing have equal say, and everything flows from there. Best part: Abbasi isn't afraid to show his heart. —Jim Macnie

Smart, original, nicely dovetailed fusion of South Asian and jazz concepts. Abbasi is a team player, so it's not so much about his gargoyling guitar as the liquid rhythms, complex meters and integrated ensemble feel. With Rudresh Mahanthappa and Vijay Iyer on your team, it's hard to come up short. —Paul de Barros

Eldar, *Virtue*

Prodigies are saddled with all sorts of unreal expectations, but this one's managing some of the early hurdles. Eldar is virtuous in terms of speed and dexterity; the musical conception is flashy, romantic, with Brad Mehldau-ish complexity if not always complementary depth. Significant contravening lapses in taste, though, like every time the synth takes over. —John Corbett

An overly hectic rhythm section sometimes crowds the music, whose staccato, jittery energy provides a good show of virtuosity. Solos tend to just zoom up and down scales, though Elder and Redman have a succinct exchange on "Explosion." The pianist's full measure comes on "Estate," a ballad that offers room and something to work with. —John McDonough

The rating accounts for the chops and chemistry it takes to achieve this level of intricate interplay. But it's still garish and ultimately numbing. PS: lose the synth. —Jim Macnie

Bob Florence Limited Edition

Legendary

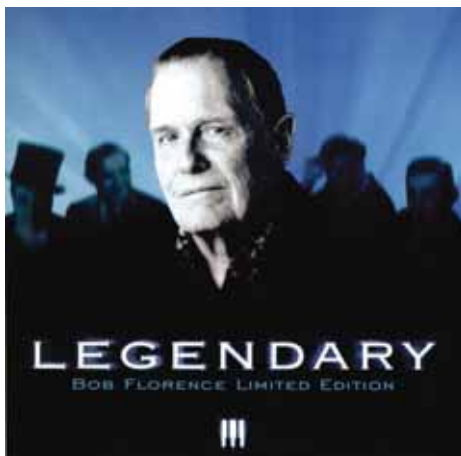
MAMA 1037

★★★★½

Big band arrangers face challenges similar to those that confront visual artists who choose to paint still-life tableaux more or less as their predecessors from centuries ago, or pianists who like their forebears build careers on the shoulders of Chopin and Beethoven. All must confront choices that come with their territory, the most critical being to balance between the accepted boundaries and pushing outside of them.

The late Bob Florence offers *Legendary* as proof of his mastery within the parameters of his idiom. On these nine tracks, he flaunts two essential traits: a flawless sense of orchestration and, where appropriate, a sense of humor that acknowledges and ameliorates the fact that little effort is made here to undo anyone's preconceptions.

Take, for example, "Geezerhood," one of four Florence compositions featured here. Not at all surprisingly given the title, it's a program piece, with an intro that suggests the maundering of two old-timers, each represented by a baritone sax. More voices enter the conversation, wandering into soliloquies that unexpectedly lock



together into a slow-rocking, brass-punched passage—which then dissolves into more absent doodling. This is clever, sly and skillful all at the same time, but it also suggests that high-toned slapstick is one of the only alternatives available to those who want to add spice to a tasty but familiar recipe.

Another device, the element of surprise, works only on familiar tunes. A quick brass stab and a figure swirling in 3/4 kick off the first track; but where the listener might expect it to lead to—say, Leonard Bernstein's "Cool"—it instead leads to a solo by Larry Koonse, whis-

pered over a purring swing, that takes a minute to reveal the outlines of "Take The 'A' Train." Similarly, Florence launches "Suicide Is Painless" with the lick that actually kicks off the TV theme, and then buries it in swirls of horn lines and harmonies until the theme presents itself a minute later, like a rabbit pulled from a hat. But surprise works in reverse, too, on a brief reading of "Auld Lang Syne," which closes the album with what sounds at first like an ominous overlay of light and dark, reminiscent in a way of Ives' "The Unanswered Question," but then lapses perhaps too quickly into a cushion of standard harmonies before disappearing finally back into shadow.

Still, it adds up to a bravura farewell from Florence, whose legacy is confirmed, along with the potential and paradox of mainstream arrangement, on *Legendary*. —Robert L. Doerschuk

Legendary: A Train; I'm All Smiles; Suicide Is Painless; Fluffy; Geezerhood; Limited Edition Express; Luci; You Must Believe In Spring; Auld Lang Syne. (71:21)

Personnel: Bob Florence, arranger, composer (4, 5, 6, 7), piano (9); Don Shelton, Kim Richmond, Tom Peterson, Jeff Driskill, Bob Efford, Bob Carr, Rusty Higgins, woodwinds; Carl Saunders, Pete DeSiena, Steve Huffsteter, Ron Stout, Larry Lunetta, trumpets; Alex Iles, Bob McChesney, Scott Whitfield, Dave Ryan, Jacques Voyemant, trombones; Craig Ware, bass trombone; Larry Koonse, guitar; Alan Broadbent, piano; Trey Henry, bass; Peter Erskine, drums.

» Ordering info: summitrecords.com

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Art Pepper

The Art History Project: Unreleased Art Vol. IV
WIDOW'S TASTE
09001

★★★★



The Art History Project: Unreleased Art Vol. IV chronicles Art Pepper's transformation from a prototypical West Coast alto player to one who assimilated the harmonic innovations that redefined jazz in the 1960s. Culled from the vaults at Contemporary, Savoy and Capitol, the three CDs document each stage of Pepper's career: *Pure Art* (1951–1960) focuses on his early sessions as a leader; *Hard Art* (1960–1968) on the years interrupted by his narcotics convictions and incarcerations; and *Consummate Art* (1975–1982) on his remarkable twilight. (Pepper's widow, the former Laurie Babitz, released the anthology on her Widow's Taste imprint.)

Pepper reemerged in the 1970s after several years at Synanon, a residential drug treatment center in Santa Monica, Calif. He was buoyed by the release of *Living Legend* (1975), his first studio album since 1960. The 1960s tracks on *Hard Art* recount Pepper's fruitful, but frustrating, immersion in John Coltrane's music. Pepper even switched to tenor saxophone while trying to reconcile Coltrane's sonic palette.

By 1968 Pepper had reclaimed the alto; his tone had lost its gloss (and much of its vibrato). He seemed to spit the notes from his horn, while displaying a newfound penchant for the altissimo register and rough staccato articulation. An unreleased 1964 session foreshadows the freedom that would become a hallmark a decade later. On "Track 2," "That Crazy Blues" and "D Section," Pepper abandons the fluid language of bop for a more visceral solo voice and simple compositions relying on bluesy riffs.

"Caravan," from a 1978 performance in Japan, highlights *Consummate Art*, and perhaps the entire anthology. Pepper throws all his weight behind a fevered solo. The rhythm section matches his intensity which escalates throughout the nearly 13-minute track. Yet for all its rawness, the track swings especially hard. Pepper revisits his early repertoire on "Angel Wings" and "Historia De Un Amor" in a 1980 reunion with Russ Freeman and Jack Sheldon.

The 1950s tracks on *Pure Art* have been previously reissued. Pepper performs mostly bop ("Pepper Returns," "Straight Life") and ballads ("What's New?") in the company of Warne Marsh, Jack Montrose, Hampton Hawes, Freeman and Sheldon. *Pure Art* reinforces the notion that Pepper's second act ended too soon. had finally reaped the rewards that his talent merited.

—Eric Fine

The Art History Project: Disc 1: Pure Art (1951–1960): Art Pepper; Fascinating Rhythm; Patricia; Tickle Toe; Pepper Returns; Mambo De La Pinta; These Foolish Things; Cool Bunny; Besame Mucho; Art's Oregano; Diane; I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me; Straight Life; Everything Happens To Me; Nutmeg; What's New; Begin the Beguine. (68:55)

Personnel: Art Pepper, alto saxophone; Stan Kenton Innovations Orchestra (unlisted personnel); Carl Perkins, piano; Ben Tucker, bass; Chuck Flores, drums; Jack Sheldon, trumpet; Russ Freeman, piano; Leroy Vinnegar, bass; Shelly Manne, drums; Bob Whitlock, bass; Bobby White, drums; Hampton Hawes, piano; Joe Mondragon, bass; Larry Bunker, drums; Gary Frommer, drums; Warne Marsh, tenor saxophone; Ronnie Ball, piano; Jack Montrose, tenor saxophone; Claude Williamson, piano; Monty Budwig, bass.

Disc 2: Hard Art (1960–1968): Rehearsal; Track Two; So In Love; Talk; That Crazy Blues; D Section; Chelsea Bridge. (42:37)

Personnel: Art Pepper, alto saxophone; Frank Strazzeri, piano; Hersch Hammel, bass; Bill Goodwin, drums; Charles Owens, alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; Don Menza, tenor saxophone, flute; Pat LaBarbera, tenor, flute; John Laws, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Al Porcino, Bill Prince, Ken Faulk, Dave Culp, trumpets; Jim Trimble, Rick Stepton, Peter Graves, trombones; Walt Namuth, guitar; Joe Azarello, piano; Gary Walters, bass; Buddy Rich, drums.

Disc 3: Consummate Art (1975–1982): Caravan; Lost Life; Landscape; Angel Wings; Historia De Un Amor; Mambo Koyama; That's Love. (69:17)

Personnel: Art Pepper, alto saxophone; Milcho Leviev, piano; Bob Magnusson, bass; Carl Burnett, drums; Smith Dobson, piano; Jim Nichols, bass; Brad Bilhorn, drums; Stanley Cowell, piano; George Mraz, bass; Ben Riley, drums; Jack Sheldon, trumpet; Russ Freeman, piano; Magnusson, bass; Burnett, drums.

» Ordering info: straightlife.info

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Marcus Strickland Trio

Idiosyncrasies

STRICK MUZIK 004

★★★★

There have been countless saxophone trio recordings since Sonny Rollins essentially pioneered the form on *Way Out West*. But upon slipping Marcus Strickland's latest take into the deck, the listener can't help but leapfrog over half a century's worth of refinements back to the 1957 original.

The two sessions share not only instrumentation but a similar sense of purpose: the lack of a chordal instrument means that the saxophonist is more firmly tethered to melody, but both leaders find a strange freedom in this seeming limitation. Like Newk before him, Strickland has assembled a set of tunes with strong, direct melodies that inspire boundless reveries.

And though he doesn't don spurs and a 10-gallon hat to explore the terrain of country music, Strickland wanders just as far afield to find his material. The songs by Stevie Wonder and Outkast may not be particularly surprising given Strickland's recent funk-leaning experi-



ments, but he also culls pieces by Malian singer Oumou Sangare, Argentinean-Swedish singer-songwriter José González and a Björk song from her role in Lars von Trier's film *Dancer In The Dark*.

Strickland's versions are in a sense *more* pop-oriented than the originals—in the best sense, of making a direct emotional connection. On Björk's "Scatterheart," in particular, he strips away the dramatics and the Icelandic singer's penchant for labyrinthine melodic filigrees and uncovers the soulful desperation

buried within.

Strikingly, the leader's own originals are just as memorable, and tailor-made for his tightly attuned trio. That communication is so empathic between Strickland and his drummer, identical twin E.J., is hardly surprising, but bassist Ben Williams is consistently an equal partner without the benefit of genetics. Throughout the album, the trio maintains a sound both sparse and rich, with a relaxed ease that allows for experimentation but without the airiness ever feeling empty.

The threesome's effortless teamwork is embodied on "Rebirth," the leader's plangent ballad. Marcus' tenor is both keening and steely, E.J.'s brushwork a hushed whisper, while Williams provides an insistent but unintrusive throb. The combined effect is one of tenderness charged with an undercurrent of urgent passion, the blood pulsing in one's temple at a moment of quiet intimacy.

—Shaun Brady

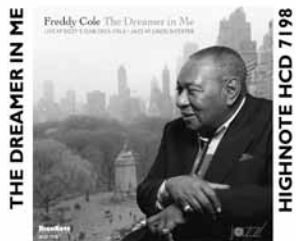
Idiosyncrasies: Cuspy's Delight; Rebirth; Scatterheart; The Child; Middleman; She's Alive; Portrait Of Tracy; Set Free; You've Got It Bad Girl; Ne Be Fe; Time To Send Someone Away. (60:14)

Personnel: Marcus Strickland, soprano and tenor saxophones, clarinet (4); Ben Williams, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums.

» Ordering info: strickmuzik.com

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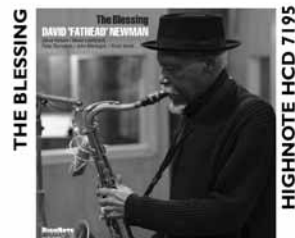
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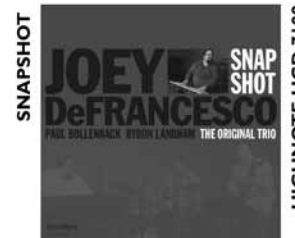
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Time Keepers Wait For No One

A bouncy take of an Isley Brothers classic—with a rougher-than-usual Kirk Whalum on tenor—signals drummer Carl Allen and bassist Rodney Whitaker's intent to explore pop songs with a spiritual core. **Work To Do (Mack Avenue 1045; 64:02)** ★★★ runs the gamut from just bass and Rodney Jones' guitar for Johnny Mandel's "A Time For Love" to a nonet for two tracks, including a brassy interpretation of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." Unfortunately, Diego Rivera's busy arrangements of the latter and "Eleanor Rigby," which he pushes through numerous tempo changes à la Buddy Rich, make the recording seem bloated through its mid-section.

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Until his death in August, drummer Rashied Ali maintained subtle control over his estimable power. Renowned for his dialogue with John Coltrane on *Interstellar Space*, Ali was never content to coast on his mid-'60s accomplishments. **While Live In Europe (Survival 126; 67:25)** ★★★★★ highlights the Coltrane-inspired tenor work of Lawrence Clark, the quintet also includes incisive trumpeter Josh Evans and fluid bassist Joris Teepe, and builds its Finnish set around two James Blood Ulmer compositions. The Ulmer themes provide effective fuel for free-flowing extrapolation, while Clark's mid-tempo "Lourana" allows Ali to demonstrate that he was much more than a crash-and-bash accompanist.

Ordering info: rashiedali.org

Crisp articulation and brisk asides are the signatures of journeyman Louis Hayes, and both are prominently on display on **The Time Keeper (18th & Vine 1058; 50:48)** ★★★½. Featuring veteran hard bop saxophonist Abraham Burton and—on four of the nine tracks—vibist Steve Nelson, the one-day session cruises through a number of pleasant-but-predictable performances before hitting its peak with a lively interpretation of Jobim's "Double Rainbow." While *The Time Keeper* is lacking in sustained creative fire, the recording of Hayes' drums is exemplary, highlighting his martini-dry cymbals.

Ordering info: 18thandvinejazz.com

With its sly reference to Columbus,

Alvin Queen:
a joyful sizzle



DL MEDIA

Ohio's highly vocal audiences, **Long Street Charm (Sound Judgment 103; 66:03)** ★★★ is drummer Tony Martucci's tribute to the organ combos of his youth. It's a frequent move by those who came of age on the bandstands of working-class bars in the 1970s, but Martucci raises it above a pedestrian nostalgia exercise through his selection of organist Bill Heid, saxophonist Lyle Link and guitarist Geoff Reecer. While their program focuses on favorites from the period—including "Wives And Lovers," Coltrane's "Lonnie's Lament" and Grant Green's "Green Jeans"—the quartet attacks each song with vigor, as if anticipating jeers from the tough Columbus crowd.

Ordering info: dcjazz.com/tonymartucci

Longtime American expatriate Alvin Queen plays with a snap and sizzle that make **Mighty Long Way (Justin Time 8549; 65:52)** ★★★★★ a joyful celebration from start to finish. Art Blakey is an obvious influence, and Queen's septet—highlighting trumpeter Terell Stafford and organist Mike LeDonne—burns through Wayne Shorter's "United" and transforms Oscar Peterson's "Backyard Blues" into the type of soulful march that the Jazz Messengers perfected. Peterson—Queen's steady employer for the last three years of the pianist's life—also contributes the spirited "Sushi," which gives alto saxophonist Jesse Davis the opportunity to shine. **DB**

Ordering info: justin-time.com



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Telma, March 19

Fourth Stream

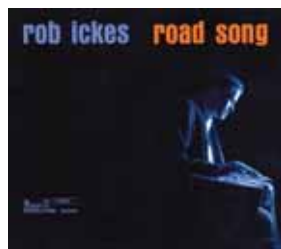
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Rob Ickes

Road Song
RESO-REVOLUTION 05335
★★★★½



Don't think for an instant that acclaimed bluegrass dobro player Rob Ickes' new jazz album *Road Song* is an exercise in corn-pone fun. It's serious jazz artistry for the Nashville resident. Back in 1999, Ickes' album *Slide City* began his studio investigations of jazz, and then he went on to seal the deal with 2002's *What It Is*, alongside Bay Area-based saxophonist-bassoonist Paul Hanson and a jazz rhythm section. Actually, it's no rare thing for top members of the country community to be comfortable in a jazz mode. Consider, for starters, David Grisman, Tony Rice, Bela Fleck, Chris Thile, Matt Flinner and Doug Jernigan.

What's unexpected about Ickes' new release is his decision to perform only with a pianist. With taste and spirit, he and his neighbor Michael Alvey acquit themselves well on mostly jazz evergreens. Ickes is a virtuoso. Using tempo and space wisely, and resisting the dense, ceaseless propulsion of bluegrass, he displays shadings and timbres to express feeling. A complex mix of mellifluous joy and bluesy ambivalence exists in his interpretation of the Wes Montgomery title song. One might think "Caravan" and "Take The 'A' Train" are tough

songs in which to find new wrinkles of delight or enchantment, but Ickes succeeds behind his keen sense of melody and his solo flights of surprising discovery. However, "Song For My Father" finds him flying low with clipped creative wings, just too adoring of the famous melody.

Ickes' dobro on Oscar Peterson's "Hymn To Freedom" has a special stateliness about it, and the melancholic tones he inserts into "I Can't Make You Love Me" (a song associated with Bonnie Raitt) are a good bet to linger with the listener long after the music ceases. Several spots on the album have Ickes close to the intimacy that Jim Hall achieved in the studio company of Bill Evans in the early '60s. His work is such a fresh-sounding tonic that it's disappointing whenever he backs off and capable pianist Alvey takes over.

Unfortunately, Ickes erred in asking Robinella to sing on an updating of the Hank Williams classic "You Win Again" and two more songs. She's the epitome of vocal blandness—void of any nuances of phrasing and texture.

—Frank-John Hadley

Road Song: Song For My Father; Caravan; You Win Again; Road Song; If I Had You; I Can't Make You Love Me; West Coast Blues; The Nearness Of You; Take The "A" Train; Hymn To Freedom. (51:18)

Personnel: Rob Ickes, dobro, Scheerhorn acoustic slide guitar (3, 5); Michael Alvey, piano; Robinella, vocals (3, 5, 8).

» Ordering info: resorevolution.com

Mike Stern

Big Neighborhood
HEADS UP 3157
★★★★



Mike Stern is no stranger to artful collaborations. He regularly welcomes special guests during his semi-regular gigs at 55 Bar in New York's West Village, connected with fellow six-string heavyweights John McLaughlin and Bill Frisell a decade ago for *Play* and was joined by an impressive lineup of musicians in 2006 for *Who Let The Cats Out?* Stern again wields his fluid, inspired fretwork in a roomful of high-profile players for the satisfying *Big Neighborhood*.

The musical environs here indeed are roomy, and eclectic, starting with a one-two punch—rock-hard slamdowns with Steve Vai and Eric Johnson on the title track and "6th Street," respectively. Contrast those barnburners with the closer—a jaunty, Monk-ish blues tune, "Hope You Don't Mind," featuring Randy Brecker's incisive trumpet solo—and the speedy, starting-stopping bebop piece "Coupe De Ville," built on the changes to "There Is No Greater Love," with superb young bassist

Esperanza Spalding.

The rangy program also includes two other tunes pairing Spalding's playing and singing with Terri Lyne Carrington's smart and hearty drumming: the mellow, lilting "Song For Pepper" and the exceedingly pretty ballad "Bird Blue." Medeski Martin and Wood drive the retro soul-funk grooves hard on "That's All It Is" and anchor the stair-stepping slow jam of "Check One." Bassist Richard Bona, a frequent Stern collaborator, steers the West Africa-to-fusion rhythms of "Reach," while Middle Eastern textures flavor "Moroccan Roll," featuring Vai on sitar guitar, and a ferocious duel with Stern. Jazz, fusion, blues, heavy rock, world music—Stern is as agile and adaptive as he is creative.

—Philip Booth

Big Neighborhood: Big Neighborhood; 6th Street; Reach; Song For Pepper; Coupe De Ville; Bird Blue; Moroccan Roll; Long Time Gone; Check One; That's All It Is; Hope You Don't Mind. (69:55)

Personnel: Mike Stern, Steve Vai (1, 7), Eric Johnson (2, 8), guitar; Lincoln Goines (1, 2, 7, 8), Richard Bona (3), Esperanza Spalding (4, 5, 6), Chris Minh Doky (11), bass; Dave Weckl (1, 3, 7), Lionel Cordew (2, 8), Terri Lyne Carrington (4, 5, 6), Cindy Blackman (11), drums; Jim Beard (1–8, 11), piano, organ, keyboards; Bob Franceschini (3), Bob Malach (5, 9, 10), saxophone; Randy Brecker (11), trumpet; John Medeski (9, 10), organ, electric piano, clavinet; Billy Martin (9, 10), drums; Chris Wood (9, 10), bass; Bona (3), Spalding (4–6), vocals.

» Ordering info: headsup.com

Fred Hersch

Fred Hersch Plays Jobim

SUNNYSIDE 1223

★★★★

Fred Hersch Plays Jobim extends one of the most engaging series of solo piano recordings going. As lyrical a player as Hersch is, you never ease into his efforts the way you do with other pianists—or at least you never have the luxury of thinking you know what's coming. Cerebral but open-spirited, he's always finding personal ways to revoice familiar songs, be they Thelonious Monk masterworks or Rodgers and Hammerstein standards. Here, he serves an overlooked side of Antonio Carlos Jobim's genius by playing down the melodies and playing up the harmonic possibilities, all the while adding special emotional weight.

The early emerging masterpiece is "O Grande Amor." An episodic wonder, the performance captures the different dimensions of love by moving through buoyant contrapuntal lines, high-stepping phrases, an elegant classical-style interlude and dark harmonies that suggest shifting tectonic plates without the fault lines. On "Insensatez," Hersch plays with such clarity and graceful concision, he creates the feeling of words being set down in a letter—one knowingly stamped with *saudade*.

Throughout *Fred Hersch Plays Jobim*, we're aware of a wider musical world, whether the pianist is invoking Michel Legrand's "I Will Wait For You" on "Insensatez" or flying down to Rio on "Brigas Nunca Mais" with the spirit of Fred Astaire in tow.

—Lloyd Sachs

Fred Hersch Plays Jobim: Por Toda Minha Vida; O Grande Amor; Luiza; Meditação; Insensatez; Brigas Nunca Mais; Modinha/Olha Maria; Desafinado; Corcovado. (50:17)

Personnel: Fred Hersch, piano; Jamey Haddad, percussion (6).



Tiempo Libre

Bach In Havana

SONY MASTERWORKS 88697-44701

★★½

Tiempo Libre has an interesting back story. The group led a double life in their native Havana, studying classical music at Cuba's Russian-style conservatory La ENA by day and by night playing fiery timba and Latin jazz as well as rumba and in tambores—music prohibited at La ENA because of its Afro-Cuban roots. Unfortunately, *Bach In Havana* is closer to the music of a Sunday morning cathedral than a Saturday evening tambores session.

Forcing a hot-blooded Cuban group to submerge its talents under the weight of a deadening, often silly Bach-infused approach is enough to make you long for Barry Manilow. And it's a shame, as Tiempo Libre is a brilliant group, particularly bassist Tebelio "Tony" Fonte, trumpeter Cristobal Ferrer Garcia and percussionist Hilario Bell. All too often, just as they are beginning to burn, as in "Olas De Yemaya" (based on C Major Prelude, *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*), a trite Bach-styled piano melody will waylay the group like a wet blanket.

—Ken Micallef

Bach In Havana: Tu Conga Bach, Fuga, Air On A G String, Clave In C Minor, Gavotte, Mi Orisha, Minuet In G, Olas De Yemaya, Baqueteo Con Bajo, Timbach, Kyrie. (47:52)

Personnel: Jorge Gomez, keyboards, vocals; Joaquin "El Kid" Diaz, lead vocal; Leandro Gonzalez, congas; Tebelio "Tony" Fonte, bass; Cristobal Ferrer Garcia, trumpet; Hilario Bell, percussion; timbales; Luis "Rosca" Beltran Castillo, tenor saxophone; Paquito D'Rivera, alto saxophone, clarinet; Yosvany Terry, alto saxophone.



» Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

» Ordering info: sonymasterworks.com

GERALD WILSON ORCHESTRA DETROIT



Detroit is **Mr. Gerald Wilson's** fourth release on Mack Avenue Records, and the follow-up to his critically acclaimed **Monterey Moods**. Commissioned by the Detroit International Jazz Festival to celebrate its 30th anniversary, *Detroit* is a six-part suite that evokes both the edge and the ambition of this blue collar city. *Detroit* premiered at the Festival on Gerald's 91st birthday at which time he was honored with The Spirit Of Detroit Award in recognition of his outstanding achievements and contributions to the city.

Featuring: trumpeters Jon Faddis, Bobby Rodriguez and Jimmy Owens; trombonists Dennis Wilson, Luis Bonilla and Doug Purviance; saxophonists Steve Wilson, Kamasi Washington, Antonio Hart, Jackie Kelso and Ronnie Cuber; pianists Brian O'Rourke and Renee Rosnes; bassists Trey Henry, Peter Washington and Todd Coolman; drummers Mel Lee and Lewis Nash. Guest soloists include flute master Hubert Laws, trumpeter Sean Jones and guitarist Anthony Wilson.

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John Surman
Brewster's Rooster
 ECM 13148
 ★★½



The lilting and playful balancing act that saxophonist John Surman and guitarist John Abercrombie engage in here is what lingers after repeated listens. Certainly, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Jack DeJohnette are key and essential members, and their support makes every song lift off. Still, a mournful, tender song like “Slanted Sky” finds Surman on soprano in a kind of dialog with Abercrombie’s trademark soft-toned edge, the two of them singing and playing around the lovely melody.

The course and attitude shift remarkably with “Hilltop Dancer,” a tune true to its title sporting a bouncy flair. Abercrombie’s edge is, not surprisingly, more pronounced, even rockish as Surman mans his hefty baritone, adding to the sense of the dance being one that seemingly defies gravity. More baritone comes with the uptempo jazz waltz “No Finesse.” By this point, the listener may have realized that *Brewster’s Rooster* is shaping up to be a fairly straightforward jazz album. And a song like “Kickback” has the advantage of sounding like a classic Gateway Trio (Abercrombie, DeJohnette and bassist Dave Holland) song with the bonus of Surman’s hefty delivery, the song a driving vamp that both swings and rocks.

—John Ephland

Brewster’s Rooster: Slanted Sky; Hilltop Dancer; No Finesse; Kickback; Chelsea Bridge; Haywain; Counter Measures; Brewster’s Rooster; Going For A Burton. (64:50)

Personnel: John Surman, baritone and soprano saxophones; John Abercrombie, guitar; Drew Gress, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

» Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Akira Sakata & Chikamorachi
Friendly Pants
 FAMILY VINEYARD 66
 ★★★★★



Reedist Akira Sakata has long been one of the most thrilling figures of Japanese jazz ever since making a name for himself as a key member of the Yosuke Yamashita Trio in 1972. His razor-sharp tone on the alto saxophone brought a dynamic mixture of fiery energy and deeply soulful lyricism to the group. As a leader in his own right he’s continued to make high-octane music of uncompromising vigor. Sadly, he’s remained unknown in the U.S., with most of his work released only in his homeland and Europe. With the release of *Friendly Pants*, his work has been made available for domestic audiences.

He’s been working with the same American musicians for the last five years or so; Chikamorachi features drummer Chris Corsano and bassist Darin Gray. Most of the pieces begin with a meditative calm, as Sakata slowly unfurls tender, bittersweet melodies, with the rhythm team caressing and pulling at his lines. Yet while “Un” maintains a ballad feel throughout its 12 minutes, the others typically build in intensity, with Corsano and Gray stoking the fire with hyper-kinetic movement and roiling grooves; Sakata pushes from melodic warmth to upper register cries in long natural arcs, driven by an unstoppable momentum and clear logic.

—Peter Margasak

Friendly Pants: Friendly Pants; Un; In Case, Let’s Go To Galaxy; That Day of Rain; With Saigyo Path; Yo! Yo! Dime.

Personnel: Akira Sakata, alto saxophone; Darin Gray, bass; Chris Corsano, drums.

» Ordering info: scdistribution.com

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Empowerment Now

Christine Santelli: *Any Better Time* (VizzTone 388010; 41:35) ★★★½ On her seventh album, this New Yorker successfully expands her personal vision of the blues with several strains of country music, including Cajun. The grain in Santelli's voice lends her singing an edge of earnestness that fits the appealing tunes she wrote about giving in to despair ("Down In The Valley") and jumping off the "fast track" ("Lilly's Song"). Not a blustery guitarist herself, Santelli calls on Popa Chubby to incinerate the blues-rock breakout "Ode To Bill." Her ambitious "For You" matches the song character's emotional health to—surprise—giddy circus music.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Candy Kane: *Superhero* (Delta Groove 133; 55:19) ★★★½ Cancer survivor Kane brings a huge appetite for life to her first post-op album. In her typically take-charge mode, she infuses the original shuffle "Hey! Toughen Up!" and the Chicago classic "You Need Love" with an earthshaking urgency, not far down the scale from where Koko Taylor made her seismic dent. The depth of Kane's formidable tenor gives credibility to her half-smiling appraisal of lovesickness in songs like "I Didn't Listen To My Heart" (which points to classic New Orleans r&b). The Californian dynamo employs good musicians, such as guitarists Laura Chavez and Kid Ramos.

Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

The California Honeydrops: *Soul Tub!* (Tub Tone 001; 45:00) ★★★ Using voices, guitar, piano, trumpet, saxophone, washboard, jug, tub bass, drums and percussion, this quartet (plus studio guests) is getting noticed beyond their Oakland home base. The Honeydrops update prewar Chicago blues, jug band music, early jazz and even '60s soul music with a welcome crispness of spirit. The fun of the Memphis soul-stew title track, featuring broom-and-tub specialist Nansamba Ssensalo, is contagious—"I bet you never knew/what a bucket could do!" The only trouble comes when guitarist-trumpeter Lech Wierzynski strains too hard for pained or joyous feeling as the lead singer.

Ordering info: cahoneydrops.com

Ana Popovic: *Blind For Love* (Eclecto Groove 507; 45:01) ★½ Popovic's treatments of blues, soul and funk here are impossibly routine. Clichés infest her songwriting and, despite her best intentions, affectation creeps into her vocals and guitar work. Moreover, the West Coast pros hired to

Candy Kane:
take-charge
tenor



DELTA GROOVE PRODUCTIONS

back this Yugoslavia-born entertainer operate on automatic pilot.

Ordering info: eclectogroove.com

Fiona Boyes: *Blues Woman* (Yellow Dog 1653; 52:09) ★★★½ In Austin to make her fifth feature record, this vocalist-guitarist takes a strong and exhilarating approach to putting over 13 original tunes and one apiece from her blues-history hero J. B. Lenoir ("I Want To Go," reconditioned as an acoustic boogie) and a harp player back home in Australia named Chris Wilson (the shuffle "Look Out Love!"). What places her among the leading blues artists today is her easeful control of vocal shadings, from burlap-coarse textures to high register flights, for the expression of assorted feelings—sultry, rebellious, anguished, joyous. Trusty accompanists include pianist Marcia Ball and multi-instrumentalist/producer Mark Kazanoff.

Ordering info: yellowrecords.com

Joanne Shaw Taylor: *White Sugar* (Ruf 1147; 51:44) ★★ This up-and-coming English blues woman fronting a trio in well-known producer Jim Gaines's studio is afflicted with pyrotechnic guitar tendencies. In addition to expression rendered outsized and exaggerated, she has a light, bleached-out vocal tone. But there are signs of a level-headed blues musician behind all the blustery posturing: the relatively quiet "Heavy Heart" and "Just Another Word," by far the most likeable of nine tunes she composed.

DB

Ordering info: rufrecords.de

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Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls

Seize The Time

NAIM JAZZ 115

★★★★½



Seize The Time? Five years passed between this album and its predecessor, *Breeding Resistance*; it could just as easily have been called *Bide Your Time*.

But sometimes it takes a while to get things lined up right. Every record by the Rebel Souls manages to sound different from its predecessors and reaffirm drummer and bandleader Ted Sirota's musical and political values.

Viewed from a distance, you could say Sirota's hoeing the same row; the song titles draw the same hard line against the abusive powers that be, the music sketches a more circuitous one that connects bebop with music of the African diaspora and, in spirit if not sound, punk rock. And he is an engaging rhythmist, especially when he lets his Latin side show.

But aside from Sirota and returning multi-reedist Geof Bradfield, this is a different set of Souls. I miss the last band's steely power, in particular trombonist Jeb Bishop. The new second horn, alto saxophonist Greg Ward, brings American soul and West African pop influences whose softer, sweeter tones charm and intrigue more than they inspire. New guitarist Dave Miller indulges a facility with effects that brings a psychedelic undercurrent to Ward's "The Keys Of Freedom."

—Bill Meyer

Seize The Time: Clamptown; 13 De Maio; Free Cell Block F, 'Tis Nazi U.S.A.; Hard Times (Come Again No More); Killa Dilla; Tollway; Viva Max! (Improvised Drum Solo); J.Y.D.; Polo Mze Pt. 1; Polo Mze Pt. 2; Little D; The Keys To Freedom. (71:38)

Personnel: Geof Bradfield, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Greg Ward, alto sax; Dave Miller, guitar; Jake Vinsel, acoustic and electric bass; Ted Sirota, drums.

» Ordering info: allegro-music.com

Grant Geissman

Cool Man Cool

FUTURISM 2054

★★★★½



Angelenos have marveled at guitarist Grant Geissman's energizing contributions to the driving Gordon Goodwin Big Phat band. Elsewhere, a vague misgiving persists that

Geissman is essentially a smooth jazz guitarist on steroids. If they weren't swayed by his excellent straightahead album *Say That!* (2006), doubters should be won over by this production. Geissman's technical proficiency, fluency in multiple genres and taste mark him as a practicing master.

This is a resume of a smart chameleon with more than a few classic styles under his fingertips. "Too Cool" is a nice nod to Grant Green's Blue Note period, "Chicken Shack" channels Wes Montgomery's octaves, "Even If ..." touches Kenny Burrell's quieter moments. Geissman plays clean, no matter the genre or the instrument. He articulates clearly on the Spanish-tinged Corea tribute "Chuck And Chick," the fast bopper "Some Sides" and the second line "Nawlins." The last suffers slightly from a little too much control.

—Kirk Silsbee

Cool Man Cool: Cool Man Cool; Chicken Shack Jack; Too Cool For School; Chuck And Chick; Even If ...; Dig Some Sides; One For Jerry; Minnie Lights Out; Tiki Time; Nawlins; Crazy Talk; Ya Think?; Mad Skillz; Cool Blooz. (54:20)

Personnel: Grant Geissman, electric guitar; Chuck Mangione, flugelhorn; Tom Scott, tenor saxophone; Brian Scanlon, flute, soprano, alto and tenor saxes; Emilio Palame, Chick Corea, Tom Ranier, Patrice Rushen, piano; Russell Ferrante, Fender Rhodes eclectic piano; Jim Cox, Mike Finnigan, Hammond B3 organ; Jerry Hahn, Chuck Lorre, Dennis C. Brown, guitars; Trey Henry, bass, tuba; Ray Brinkler, drums; Van Dyke Parks, accordion; Brian Kilgore, Alex Acuña, percussion; Charlie Bisharat, violin.

» Ordering info: grantgeissman.com

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Edward Simon Trio

Poesía

CAM JAZZ 5032

★★★★

At 40, Venezuelan pianist Edward Simon hasn't acquired the kind of name recognition that many of his contemporaries enjoy, but on the strength of *Poesía* that doesn't seem fair. Bookended by two slowly unfolding takes of his pretty "My Love For You," the album is filled with absorbing piano work, attractive writing and a rhythm section—bassist John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade—that alternately purrs and roars.

The deliberate placement of the two takes of the love song indicate the care Simon has taken in pacing the album, and two Patitucci compositions play key roles. "Winter" features a rolling piano lead, beautifully articulated, and the kind of coiled energy that Wayne Shorter has come to rely on from Patitucci and Blade. "Roby" opens with meditative, ringing notes from Simon, and then expands into a dark, quiet ballad.

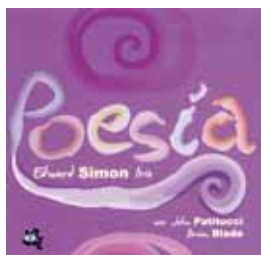
Patitucci's tuneful electric work provides sonic contrast on "One For J.P.," and a pair of aggressive Simon tunes balances the ballads and demonstrates the full power of the band. Again, Simon's pacing pays dividends, as the choppy "Intention"—with its jagged, five-note bass motif—gives way to the surging "Triumph." Best of all is a de-construction of "Giant Steps" that could only work with a trio with superior harmonic and rhythmic sense.

—James Hale

Poesía: My Love For You (take 1); Winter; Giant Steps; One For J.P.; Roby; Poesía; Intention; Triumph; My Love For You (take 2). (54:38)

Personnel: Edward Simon, piano; John Patitucci, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

» Ordering info: camjazz.com



Diego Barber

Calima

SUNNYSIDE 1210

★★

Calima, the debut album from Flamenco guitarist Diego Barber, has some nice moments, but these flashes of brilliance aren't enough to carry the album. The result, a pleasant, but not fully satisfying album, is not from a lack of trying or talent: Barber's playing is beautiful, his fingers fly lightly over the fretboard, and his backing band Fly (saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard) is spot on throughout.

The strongest performances are on tracks, such as "Richi," that have a discernable melody and form, providing the listener a steady bearing. Those that don't, like the opener, "Piru," or "Desierto," which waits over two minutes before giving anything to grasp onto, tend to float aimlessly. These pieces create a wonderful sense of atmosphere, but not much else. "Catalpa" and "Virgianna," both featuring a burning Turner, are *Calima's* tightest and best executed tracks. Barber shreds on "Catalpa," but the sound of his acoustic guitar doesn't match Ballard's driving beats.

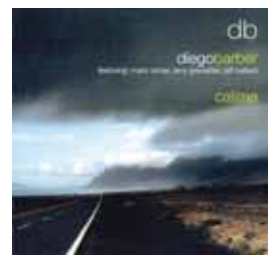
The final track, "Air," represents the album as a whole, in that it lacks a general focus, purpose or direction. During its 20 minutes it shifts from virtuosic solo flamenco flourishes by Barber, to sparse avant-garde explorations, to a short section featuring the highly melodic Turner.

—Chris Robinson

Calima: Piru; 190 East; Desierto; Catalpa; Lanzarote; Richi; Virgianna; Air. (63:58)

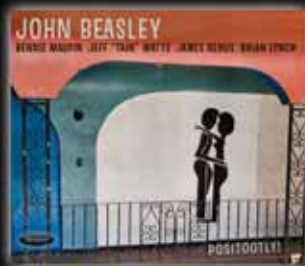
Personnel: Diego Barber, guitar; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

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Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Strings

Renegades

DELMARK 587

★★★½



The music that seems to drip from every pore of Chicago's Nicole Mitchell has finally been making its way to disc over the last few years, and her impressive streak of gripping recorded work continues with the debut album from her Black Earth Strings ensemble, a spin-off of her Black Earth Ensemble. Violinist and violist Renee Baker—an established classical musician whom Mitchell coaxed into the world of jazz and improvised music a few years ago—cellist Tomeka Reid and bassist Josh Abrams (who doubles on the bass-like Moroccan guimbre on a few tracks), as well as percussionist Shirazette Tinnin, are all flexible partners in the flutist's multi-pronged endeavor, in which sleepy third stream experiments plays no part.

Mitchell, the composer, covers lots of territory, building the springy "Wade" from elements of the African-American spiritual "Wade In The Water," and casting a beautifully meditative spell of self-determination on "Be My Own Grace," where she sings, "I will never, never

again let my destiny be in the hands of my lover." While Mitchell's lines often take center stage—and her extensive use of piccolo and alto flutes puts her playing in greater relief amid the strings—the ensemble aspect of the performances dominates, with solo passages arriving in concise, loosey-goosey spurts, a

constant shuffle of foreground and background activity, elegantly arranged unison passages and spiky bursts of free improvisation.

With a composer open to exploring as many sounds and approaches as Mitchell, it's important to have a group that keep things grounded, and despite the range of the pieces here, the music never feels dilettantish or erratic. Indeed, by leading several different groups the flutist seems acutely aware of how to channel those diverse interests, as she effectively proves here.

—Peter Margasak

Renegades: Crossroads; No Matter What; Ice; Windance; Renegades; By My Own Grace; What If; Symbology #2A; Wade; Waterdance; Symbology #1; Mama Found Out; If I Could Have You The Way I Want You; Symbology #2; Waris Dirie; Aaya's Rainbow. (67:57)

Personnel: Nicole Mitchell, flute, alto flute, piccolo flute; Renee Baker, violin, viola; Tomeka Reid, cello; Josh Abrams, bass, guimbre; Shirazette Tinnin, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: delmark.com

Joris Teepe Big Band

We Take No Prisoners

CHALLENGE RECORDS 73284

★★★



Born in the Netherlands, bassist/composer Joris Teepe arrived in New York in 1992, and has spent the ensuing decades backing up a who's who of mainstream jazz leaders, all while amassing a considerable discography of his own featuring the likes of Don Braden, Chris Potter and Randy Brecker. His first big band outing is the result of a commission for the North Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, and the ensuing material shows the influence of both homes.

Teepe has embraced Americana with a fervor undiluted by the ironic detachment with which most natives would feel obligated to filter their approach. But though the album is chock full of old school swing, it is refracted slightly through the bent lens of the New Dutch variety.

The leader never evidences the need to hog the spotlight on the disc's six tracks, but there are hints throughout that this is a bassist's date. First are the burly arrangements, which apply the full weight of the ensemble's 17 pieces on bold, steamroller themes. Even the idyllic opening section of "Peace On Earth" doesn't trade power for delicacy, instead moving the horns with the lumbering grace of shifting glaciers.

There's also the attention lavished on low-end compatriots Earl McIntyre (bass trombone) and Jason Marshall (baritone sax). Both are showcased on the title tune, which begins with a power-walking piano trio but erupts into big-shouldered horn cascades, the show of force which backs up the title's tough talk.

Teepe is unafraid of carrying the banner for his influences, from the jaunty, stabbing Duke Ellington-like lines of opener "Flight 643" to the overtly Charles Mingus-evoking bass solo that opens "The Princess And The Monster," which evolves over its 13 minutes into a florid dirge.

Most poignant is "Almost Lucky," which features the late Rashied Ali, a frequent collaborator over the years. The rhythm-frontline relationship is herein reversed so that the horns provide slabs of monolithic sound, loosing the drummer to engage in a free-roaming conversation with Teepe as well as Bruce Arnold's atmospheric guitar.

—Shaun Brady

We Take No Prisoners: Flight 643; We Take No Prisoners; Peace On Earth; Almost Lucky; It Is Peculiar; The Princess And The Monster. (54:43)

Personnel: Michael Mossman, John Eckert, Vitaly Golovnev, Josh Evans, trumpets; Noah Bless, Dion Tucker, Stafford Hunter, Earl McIntyre, trombones; Mark Gross, Craig Bailey, Don Braden (5, 6), Peter Brainin, Adam Kolker (1–4), Jason Marshall, reeds; Jon Davis, piano; Bruce Arnold, guitar; Joris Teepe, bass; Gene Jackson, Rashied Ali (4), drums.

» Ordering info: challengerecords.com



www.AnzicRecords.com

Cornelius Cardew: revolutionary's buzz



MATCHLESS RECORDINGS

Cardew's Revolutionary Legacy

For much of his truncated life, Cornelius Cardew sought to revolutionize the role of the composer. While an assistant to Karlheinz Stockhausen in the early '60s, Cardew denounced serialism as dictatorial. From '63 to '67, Cardew subverted the composer's conventional control mechanisms with the 193-page graphic score of "Treatise." In 1966, Cardew, an adept multi-instrumentalist, began a five-year membership in the improvising group AMM, which reinforced the idea that music was first and foremost a social activity. This fueled Cardew's agenda in the '70s with the Scratch Orchestra, which yielded another radical work, "The Great Learning." Eventually, Cardew's Communist ideology led him to reject avant-garde music altogether, and he spent his last years writing mostly saccharine folk-rock songs for Peoples' Liberation Music and other collectives.

Cardew was 45 when a hit-and-run driver killed him near his London home, which explains the title of John Tilbury's 1,026-page biography, *Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981) a life unfinished (Copula)*. Tilbury was an early and constant colleague of Cardew's, himself a pianist renowned for his interpretations of Morton Feldman's music and his work with AMM after Cardew's death. His proximity to his subject, however, does not result in hagiography. Instead, Tilbury presents a warts-and-all account, albeit one overshadowed by a wealth of precisely stated information and insight into a period of rapidly evolving ideas about music. Even as Cardew's music was folded into his political activism (he was arrested just weeks before his death for disrupting the House of Commons), Tilbury's meticulous account makes for an unlikely page-turner. When Cardew comes to his abrupt end, Tilbury describes it and the aftermath with compelling bluntness. Though its length may be a deterrent, this is a biography that will prompt further exploration of Cardew's music.

Ordering info: matchlessrecordings.com

The 1967 QUaX Ensemble performance *Treatise (Mode 205; 59:29, 67:31) ★★★* has appeared as if on cue. Flutist Petr Kotik's quintet sounds frequently robust, which their doubling on various instruments and noise-producing objects enhances. However, it is not a provocative result by contemporary standards, especially the AMM's. Although Cardew gave musicians complete interpretative freedom, it is hard to imagine him approving of this concert's formulated motives, let alone the intrusion of loungey jazz piano in the second half.

Ordering info: moderecords.com

AMM's recent albums better serve Cardew's revolutionary legacy. So does Keith Rowe, who left the group in 2004. *Keith Rowe (ErstLive 07; 36:31) ★★★★★* is exemplary of how Rowe's solo music incorporates a disembodied tabletop guitar and an array of electronics, contact miked objects and found materials (usually through radios) to create a stark architecture one hum, click and buzz at a time. For this 2008 Tokyo concert, Rowe expanded his usual palette, employing iPod-delivered excerpts from recordings of late 17th and early 18th Century music, creating juxtapositions that are initially jarring, but are ultimately reconciled through Rowe's fastidiousness to create a strange beauty.

Ordering info: erstwhilerecords.com

The virtues of AMM's "laminal" method, where sounds are layered to give an improvisation its momentum, are fully explicated on *Trinity (Matchless MRCD71; 69:22) ★★★★★½*. Tilbury's impeccable keying and Prévost's attack, particularly his cymbal bowing, constitute a complete music whose only hazard is that it can render additional voices extraneous. However, guest saxophonist John Butcher's nuanced use of texture complements the luminous sparseness the duo creates. Initially, Butcher slips through the silences; by the end of the album, he leaves his mark without upsetting the delicate balance.

Ordering info: matchlessrecordings.com

DB



Jason Lindner Now Vs Now

Produced by Meshell Ndegeocello and mixed by Bob Power (The Roots, Erika Badu), this is the debut recording of

innovative keyboardist and composer Jason Lindner's *Now Vs. Now*. This explosive trio (with Mark Juliana on drums and Panagiotis Andreou on bass) seamlessly melds Funk, Rock and Jazz into a simmering cosmic groove driven by the poetry and rhythms of New York. Featuring performances by beatboxer/emcee Baba Israel, Avishai Cohen, Pedrito Martinez, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Anat Cohen, Yosvany Terry and Meshell Ndegeocello. ANZ4102 Available in stores 10/20.



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In-demand New York Bassist Joe Martin leads a rarely heard all-star ensemble featuring Brad Mehldau (Piano),

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Steve Lehman Octet

Travail, Transformation, And Flow

PI 30

★★★★½

Steve Lehman has gotten to the cusp. He regularly assembles strong small groups, and continues to hone an edgy computer-enhanced body of work and hold membership in Fieldwork, one of the decade's eminent cooperative ensembles. Still, it's been eight years since the alto saxophonist recorded his first date as a leader. For this, Lehman chose an octet, an unforgiving test of compositional and band leading skills. He delivers: *Travail, Transformation, And Flow* is his most persuasive album to date.

Lehman's scores are teeming with layers of obstinate long tones and angular phrases that are constantly being pulled by an undertow of shifting tonal centers and sharp-elbowed polyrhythms. The effect is frequently kaleidoscopic in that materials move between foreground and background to create new ensemble colors. While "Rudreshm" alludes to the hallmarks of Lehman's contemporary, Rudresh Mahanthappa, and "Living In The World Today" has the urban tinge of the GZA original, the pieces tend to prompt mostly passing comparisons with John Carter and Henry Threadgill.

—Bill Shoemaker

Travail, Transformation, And Flow: Echoes; Rudreshm; As Things Change (I Remain The Same); Dub; Alloy; Waves; No Neighborhood Rough Enough; Living In The World Today (GZA Transcription). (40:17)

Personnel: Steve Lehman, alto saxophone; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Tim Albright, trombone; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Jose Davila, tuba; Drew Gress, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

» Ordering info: pirecordings.com



La Excelencia

Mi Tumbao Social

HANDLE WITH CARE 4720

★★★★½

This five-year-old New York band flies the flag of salsa dura—hard salsa, the present-day name for the rootsy, chops-heavy style that flourished in Latin New York 35 years ago.

Co-led by conguero José Vázquez-Cofresí and timbalero Julián Silva, La Excelencia is old-school, evoking the Fania days. Bassist Jorge Bringas makes the *tumbao* jump, while Willy Rodríguez locks in on piano without a drop of synthesizer. The basic point of reference is the now-classic New York Puerto Rican-dominated style of playing Cuban genres, with a touch of Colombian flavor, and a consciousness of African traditions.

Though *salsa dura* is broadly popular in many parts of Latin America, it has not had corporate support or major media exposure for years, and this album, an independent production, takes an embattled stance. *Mi Tumbao Social* evokes not only '70s barrio style, but social consciousness. The music insists the listener dance, but the lyrics insist on pan-Latin unity, the "tumbao social" of the album's title. It's not about getting rich; it's a *fiesta popular*.

—Ned Sublette

Mi Tumbao Social: Salsa Dura; Ahora Que te Tengo Aquí; Deja De Criticar; Por Tu Traición (Salsa Version); Aña Pa' Mi Tambor; American Sueño; Duelo De Bongo; Caminando; Vendió Su Corazón; Unidad; Por Tu Traición (Bolero Version). (46:58)

Personnel: Jorge Bringas, bass; Willy Rodríguez, piano; Charles Dilone, bongo, campana, quinto; José Vázquez-Cofresí, congas, shekere; Julián Silva, timbales, maracas, tambora, catá; Ronald Prokopez, Tokunori Kajiwara, Jack Davis, trombones; Sam Hoyt, Jonathan Powell, Willie Olenek, trumpets; Edwin Pérez, vocal, coro; Gilberto Velázquez, vocal, coro, güiro.

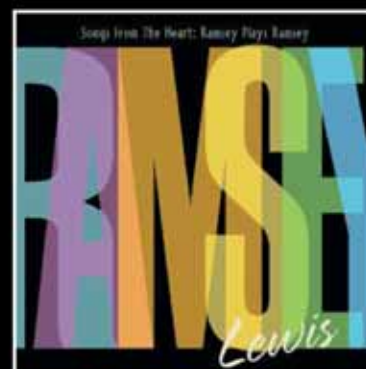
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Stefon Harris and Blackout

Urbanus
CONCORD 31286
★★★★

Eleven years and seven albums since his 1998 debut, *A Cloud Of Red Dust*, and vibraphonist Stefon Harris continues to go from strength to strength. Some criticize the 35-year-old for not adhering to strict jazz tradition, but rigidity is far from this musician's bag.

Accompanied by his equally inspired group, Blackout, Harris brings plush r&b, high-flying improvisation, Vocoded vocals and conspicuous Stevie Wonder lust to *Urbanus*' 10 tracks. A cover of Wonder's "They Won't Go (When I Go)" churns with ominous reeds, Marc Cary's aromatic Rhodes and Casey Benjamin's alien Vocoder syllables, but really, Wonder's spirit of experimentation, lush melodic style and soulful strutting suffuse *Urbanus*. "Christina" recalls an ethereal "If You Really Love Me," and "For You" is a sweetly stoned take on "My Cherie Amour."

Of course, Harris and Blackout still burn, as in drummer Terreon Gully's certifiably schizoid "Tanktified," the cubist bop of "Shake It For Me" and Cary's superbly adroit "The Afterthought." On an edgy version of Jackie McLean's "Minor March," Harris bringing his big guns to bear in his solo, expressing McLean's sideways charm with beautiful tonal shadings. "Minor March" climaxes with a manic Gully solo, as if Billy Higgins was captured by little green men and shot through with 32nd notes.

—Ken Micallef

Urbanus: Gone; Christina; Tanktified; Shake It For Me; Minor March; They Won't Go (When I Go); The Afterthought; For You; Blues For Denial; Langston's Lullaby. (55:25)

Personnel: Stefon Harris, vibraphone, marimba; Marc Cary, Fender Rhodes, keyboards; Ben Williams, bass; Terreon Gully, drums; Casey Benjamin, alto sax; Y.C. Laws, percussion; Anna Webber, flute; Anne Drummond, alto flute; Mark Vinci, Sam Ryder, clarinet; Jay Rattman, bass clarinet.

» Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Pedro Giraudo Jazz Orchestra

El Viaje
PGM 020579
★★★★

Fierce machismo and circular chord patterns reign repeatedly in Argentine bassist Pedro Giraudo's brooding, bombastic writings for big band, but he leavens the dough with occasional spurts of upper reed lines and zesty wah-wah trumpet on "El Bajonazo" and "Yarulina." The title piece, a four-movement suite, builds from piano droning a slow tango and soon hews out rough-and-tumble brass voicings and swirling sax glissandi over fluid bass lines and accelerating section work.

Giraudo democratically distributes horns solos throughout to his rugged individualists—Mike Fahie's trombone, Carl Maraghi's bari, Luke Batson's tenor, Jon Howell's trumpet. The staunchly programmatic show-stopper "Nachgeschmack" sets up a rolling gait for pampas riding, complete with tremolos, rimshots, piano ostinato and a wild-west trumpet echo. "Punto De Partida" offers more of the same, with jittery accents, a phrase from Cole Porter's "So In Love," trombones like Nepalese rad-hung horns, nervous solos by trombonist Ryan Keberle and altoist Todd Bashore.

—Fred Bouchard

El Viaje: El Bajonazo; El Viaje (I; II; III; IV); Yarulina; Nachgeschmack; Punto De Partida; Hiroshima. (51:20)

Personnel: Pedro Giraudo, bass, arranger/composer; Will Vinson, Todd Bashore, Luke Benson, Carl Maraghi, Alejandro Aviles (1, 6), reeds; Jonathan Powell, Tatum Greenblatt, trumpets; Ryan Keberle, Mike Fahie, trombones; Jess Jurkovic, piano; Jeff Davis, drums; Tony De Vivo, cajon, guiro.

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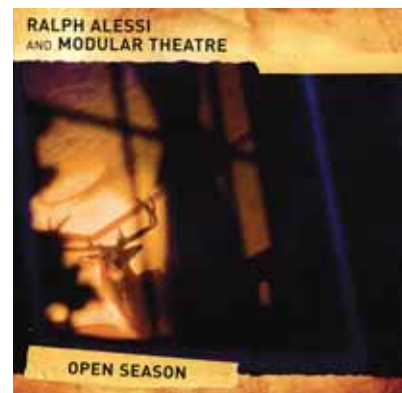


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Ralph Alessi and Modular Theatre

Open Season

RKM MUSIC 1146

★★★

There are few more effective ways to mar an otherwise excellent album than with inconsequential texts blathered throughout the proceedings. Unfortunately, Ralph Alessi is developing a bit of a track record in doing just that, albeit one that took almost a decade to establish. The perpetrator on the gifted trumpeter-composer's first Modular Theatre album, *Hissy Fit* from 1999 was Carl "Kokayi" Walker; for five tracks on *Open Season*, Alessi has turned to Will Jennings, whose disaffected monotone fits the uncredited riffs about subjects spanning Kabbalism and security cameras to a deconstructed T.

However, the redeeming failure of Jennings' contributions is that they don't nullify the merits of Alessi's compositions and the strong performances by the leader, Peter Epstein and the two platooned rhythm sections. As a composer, Alessi easily melds seeming opposites, like the bubbling rhythms and the razor sharp lines of "Morbid Curiosity" and the gentle float and quirky thematic twists of "Slow Freefall." His playing is thoroughly engaging; he has one of the most wide-ranging palettes in jazz and his solos have plenty of spark and soul, qualities that Epstein has in comparable proportions, making them a perfectly matched front line. And, repeated reference to the personnel listings is sufficient endorsement of Ben Street and Mark Ferber, given that the bass and drums are manned on four tracks by Mark Helias and Gerald Cleaver.

With a more compelling voice and texts, Alessi could carve out a significant niche for this aspect of his work. As it stands, it is something of a drag on his well-earned reputation as a brilliant trumpeter and a savvy composer.

—Bill Shoemaker

Open Season: Connecting Dots; Morbid Curiosity; Good Fever; Panoramic; Video; Slow Freefall; Tranesonic; Foxhole; Conversations With A Circus Midget; Fear Of Fruit; Connecting Dots Pt. 2. (52:48)

Personnel: Ralph Alessi, trumpet; Peter Epstein, saxophones; Ben Street, Mark Helias bass; Mark Ferber, Gerald Cleaver drums; Will Jennings, William Coltrane, voice.

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HISTORICAL

by Ted Panken

Armstrong's Virtuosity Peerless Then, Valuable Now

No corpus of jazz recordings carries greater influence than the 169 tracks that make-up **The Complete Louis Armstrong Decca Sessions (1935-1946)** (Mosaic MD7-243, 74:17/77:43/65:17/64:15/68:04/77:08/69:36) ★★★★★, documenting the maestro at the peak of his powers, when vigor and maturity equally coexisted. From the first track ("I'm In The Mood For Love") through the last ("Frim Fram Sauce"), Armstrong delivers the goods with extraordinary consistency.

During the years leading up to World War Two, Armstrong was an international star, and these sessions showcase him as a virtuoso of the trumpet and a charismatic entertainer without peer. In the matter of notes and tones, he plays with unparalleled levels of imagination, technique and conceptual sophistication. As Miles Davis stated in a remark cited towards the end of the booklet essay, Armstrong foreshadowed every vocabulary development that would transpire on his instrument.

Vocally, Armstrong addresses repertoire that runs the gamut of Swing Era concerns—classics and trifles from Tin Pan Alley and Broadway (47 are the work of major American Songbook composers); "Mexican" and "Hawaiian" exotica and other novelty numbers; some 20 New Orleans and Chicago classics from Armstrong's own canon; a suite of spirituals; collaborations with the Mills Brothers, Sidney Bechet, Jimmy Dorsey, the Casa Loma Orchestra; and a spoken word homage to Bert Williams. He unfailingly sells each lyric, execrable or sublime, as though his life depended on it, shaping the syllables and articulating the words with deep soul. The proceedings serve as a reminder, if one is needed, that Armstrong is the source of of Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday (compare the Armstrong and Holiday versions of "You're A Lucky Guy" and "You're A No-Account," recorded within five days of each other in December 1939).

On the other side of this coin, Armstrong's producers, true to the cultural mores of segregation, assigned him a number of songs with a highly racialized, sometimes antebellum orientation—"Shoe Shine Boy," "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny," "The Old Folks At Home," "Shanty Town on the Old Mississippi." That Armstrong,



Louis Armstrong: maestro's peak

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

ever smiling, projected equally vigorous levels of mojo on "that's where I labored so hard for old master, day after day in the fields of yellow corn" as to, say, "Jeepers Creepers," "Ev'ntide" and "Solitude," was increasingly problematic for a consequential percentage of his African American audience, especially after World War Two. As the popular culture soundtrack transitioned to r&b and rock 'n' roll, and as jazz expression became increasingly complex and political in the '60s and '70s, younger listeners increasingly tuned out Armstrong as a figure who seemed as mainstream as mom and apple pie.

Which perhaps is why such classics as "You Are My Lucky Star," "Struttin' With Some Barbecue," "Lyin' to Myself," "Swing That Music," "Poor Old Joe," "Jubilee" and "Wolverine Blues" are less well-known than they ought to be among today's serious jazz folks who are not hardcore Armstrong fans. Few of the latter will possess a copy of Armstrong's privately recorded "Happy Birthday" for Crosby, which is a small part of the value-added that ranks this set as a must-buy for all comers. One reason is the sound—Andreas Meyer is to be commended for the quality of his transfers and remasterings. Another is the booklet, filled with rare photos that complement the profound, exhaustive annotation, at once essay, meditation and memoir, by life-long Pops-lover Dan Morgenstern.

DB

Ordering info: mosaicrecords.com

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Steven Hashimoto's *Mothra*

Tradewind

CHICAGO SESSIONS 01V03

★★

Electric bass player Steven Hashimoto has been on the Chicago scene for more than 30 years and done about everything. His latest crop of tunes summarizes fairly fittingly what he has accomplished thus far. Surrounded by another Windy City veteran, vibes player Kathy Kelly, and some younger guns, most notably versatile guitarist Neal Alger, he mostly plays it safe.

This is frustrating because Hashimoto does have plenty of qualities. He uses humor sparingly and always in appropriate situations as the delightfully boppish "Control Freak" can testify. The leader is also at his most effective when writing vamp-based compositions. The witty "Woikin' Wit' Mr. Poikins" with his insistent beats or the darker title track are prime examples. Both give an opportunity to Dan Hesler to explore the less syrupy side of his soprano while the latter, hued by Michael Levin's bass clarinet, expands the sonic palette of the album. Eventually, it is a shame that *Tradewind* does not contain more material in that vein.

As drummer Heath Chappell's too sporadic explosive bursts suggest, it is as if Hashimoto is reluctant to take more chances. —Alain Drouot

Tradewind: Eloise; Now You Know; Haiku; Woikin' Wit' Mr. Poikins; Tradewind; Happenstance; Farewell To Manzanar; Control Freak; Samsara; Barely Blue; Musahi's Song. (72:45)

Personnel: Steven Hashimoto, electric bass; Kathy Kelly, vibes; Neal Alger, guitar; Dan Hesler, tenor, alto, soprano saxophones; Michael Levin, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor and soprano saxophones; Heath Chappell, drums.

» Ordering info: chicagosessions.com



Crimson Jazz Trio

King Crimson Songbook Volume 2

INNER KNOT 7727

★★★

These guys know their Crimson—King Crimson, that is. Sensing a jazz stream running deep down in this classic prog rock English band, the Crimson Jazz Trio mines the group's oeuvre for all it's worth.

The Crimson Jazz Trio plays it pretty straight, and yet you have to really listen to catch some of the lines, if only because to hear a song like "Pictures Of A City" in such an unlikely setting as an acoustic jazz piano trio takes some doing. Their second King Crimson outing, *Volume 2*, while fairly conventional trio jazz, is touted as more adventurous than the first. They have the speed and chops to pull it off ("In The Court Of The Crimson King" is another tour de force), the group consisting of drummer Ian Wallace (his last date before dying), bassist Tim Landers and pianist Joey Nardone. A former King Crimson member, saxophonist Mel Collins, is also on board for two tracks.

The album builds even as it generally softens its tone and attitude. The introspective "Islands Suite" of five songs and the closing "Lament" tend more to emphasize musical lyricism and personal expression with solos, reflecting another side to the Crimson Jazz Trio even as it may have that casual listener wondering what this King Crimson band was all about.

—John Ephland

King Crimson Songbook, Volume 2: The Court Of The Crimson King; Pictures Of A City; One Time; Frame By Frame; Inner Garden; Heartbeat; Islands Suite; Lament.

Personnel: Joey Nardone, piano, vocals; Tim Landers, bass; Mel Collins, saxophone; Ian Wallace, drums.

» Ordering info: innerknotrecords.com



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Aki Takase/Alexander von Schlippenbach

Iron Wedding – Piano Duets

INTAKT 160

★★★½

Partners in life, surprisingly pianists Aki Takase and Alex von Schlippenbach have not had many opportunities to record together. This is only their second duo recording. One could expect a series of blistering exchanges, and *Iron Wedding* has its share of fiery and loud passages. But it also has a lot more to bring to the table.

The duo's impressionistic approach evokes various styles. Thelonious Monk's shadow



hovers over a few pieces, but 20th-century classical piano music is the main influence. When the pianists let off steam, they weave a dense and dissonant tapestry rather than revel in lambaste.

Whatever the mood, a real osmosis takes place over the program, and it can be daunting to identify Takase or von Schlippenbach. Rather than entering into a dialogue, they become involved in interlocking figures or create an

orchestral sound. Hardly any trace of self-indulgence surfaces; the musicians refrain from burdening their ruminations with any unnecessary gestures. *Iron Wedding* is not as much about saying something new as about providing an overview of the many possibilities the piano offers.

—Alain Drouot

Iron Wedding: Early Light; Circuit; Suite In Five Parts; Steinblock; Twelve Tone Tales; RTP; Gold Inside; Eight; Zankapfel; Thrown In; Off Hand; Dwarn's Late Light; Iron Wedding; Passacaglia 1, 2, 3; Yui's Dance; Rain; Far On. (65:20)
Personnel: Aki Takase, Alexander von Schlippenbach, piano.

» Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Bill Frisell

Disfarmer

NONESUCH 478524

★★★

Bill Frisell creates sophisticated country music on *Disfarmer*, a tribute to the reclusive, self-named photographer whose Depression-era portraits immortalized the mountain community of Heber Springs, Ark. The guitarist works in miniature, while performing mostly original compositions in a quartet that features steel guitars, fiddle, bass and mandolin. True to *Disfarmer's* contradictory spirit—contemptuous of the very folks whom he photographed—Frisell and company look beyond the conventions of country music, while preserving the rustic textures and tonal colors.

The 26 tracks often revisit the same melodies via different arrangements (and titles). Many of them recall old-time songs, briefly stated and performed without the benefit of solos. "Lonely Man" features austere lyricism and dissonant voicings; by contrast Frisell picks what could pass for a campfire song on "Farmer" (sans vocals), and the group transforms bluesman Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's "That's Alright, Mama" into a bluegrass romp. However, "Lost, Night," "Shutter, Dream" and "The Wizard" digress from this folksong template and embrace chamber music, the cryptic character of the avant-garde. Such compositions typify *Disfarmer* himself: thriving on their individuality, while sometimes suffering the consequences.

—Eric Fine



Disfarmer: Disfarmer Theme; Lonely Man; Lost, Night; Farmer; Focus; Peter Miller's Discovery; That's Alright, Mama; Little Girl; Little Boy; No One Gets In; Lovesick Blues; I Can't Help It (If I'm Still In Love With You); Shutter, Dream; Exposed; The Wizard; Think; Drink; Play; I Am Not A Farmer; Small Town; Arkansas (Part 1); Arkansas (Part 2); Arkansas (Part 3); Lost Again, Dark; Natural Light; Did You See Him? (71:43)

Personnel: Bill Frisell, electric and acoustic guitars, loops, music boxes; Greg Leisz, steel guitars, mandolin; Jenny Scheinman, violin; Viktor Krauss, bass.

» Ordering info: nonesuch.com

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—Jim Macnie, DownBeat

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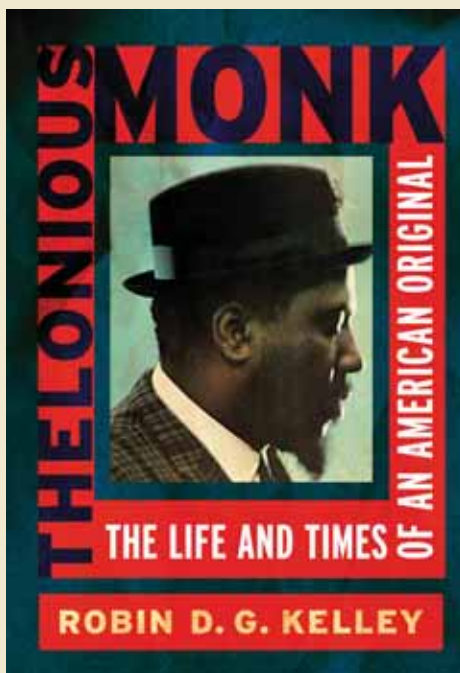
SOLISQUY

Monk's Life Thoroughly Detailed, Pointedly Reconsidered

Robin D. G. Kelley, a professor of history, American Studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, spent 14 years researching *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press). His efforts have rewarded readers with the first definitive biography of this icon. Thorough to a fault, more detailed chronicle than compelling narrative, Kelley's weighty tome tracks Monk's life, literally, month by month, gig by gig, tune by tune and, eventually, tour by tour, from his birth in Rocky Mount, N.C., in 1917 to his death in Englewood, N.J., in 1982, conjuring as complete a picture of this complex, original and enigmatic artist as possible. Kelley had broad access to Monk's family papers and augments this access with relentless scholarship, ferreting out every article, press release, album liner note and performance tape he can lay eyes or ears on, plus interviewing hundreds of sources, collating everything into a coherent, three-dimensional timeline that weaves together personal, social and musical information.

Starting with Monk's North Carolina forebears, Kelley moves on to San Juan Hill, the rough Manhattan neighborhood where Monk grew up and lived most of his life; Monk's early schooling (grades: 68 in English; 67 in French); piano lessons with Alberta Simmons; two years on the road with a tent revival group (even detective Kelley found no new traces of that period); and his early experiences as a leader. Kelley also delves into Monk's crucial role as pianist in the house band at Minton's, his public triumph and, finally, his self-imposed silence.

Kelley attempts to dispel the myth of Monk as a "mad genius"—the eccentric, bohemian loner depicted in his press—and to recontextualize him as a not-so-weird African American with a profound community history. Kelley is by and large successful, though his either-or approach, ironically, sometimes leads him to ignore his own evidence. Kelley is content to let stand, for example, Monk's lifelong complaint that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie unjustly "got all the credit" for bebop, when it's

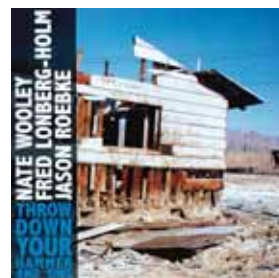


clear from the book that, in terms of recognition, Monk could be his own worst enemy—stubborn, belligerent, uncooperative and something of a diva. Such dissonance between evidence and authorial positions becomes a pattern, one of the more hilarious being that Monk's reputation for "unreliability" was unfair, since the book is a virtual catalog of the pianist's habitual transgressions: showing up late (or not at all), drunk, stoned and/or cantankerous with his employers and sidemen.

Nevertheless, Kelley does reveal that despite Monk's taciturn public eccentricity, in private, he was a devoted family man who loved hanging out with his kids at Christmas and shooting the breeze with pals and—most interestingly—a committed community activist who regularly lent his talents to the Civil Rights movement. This new view of Monk doesn't obviate the media image, but leavens and deepens it. Less complicated is Kelley's frank discussion of Monk's bipolar condition, which, along with the medications he was given, affected his behavior, particularly at the end, when Lithium seems to have drained his desire to play.

Thelonious Monk is a judicious book, with one egregious exception: a scurrilous attack on Riverside Records producer Orrin Keepnews, who did not grant Kelley an interview. Kelley's prose is workmanlike and clear, though reading it can be a slog at times. But, overall, this very welcome book is certain to be a go-to reference. **DB**

Ordering info: simonandschuster.com



Nate Wooley/Fred Lonberg-Holm/Jason Roebke

Throw Down Your Hammer And Sing

PORTER RECORDS 4022

★★★

This album's title primes one to expect union organizing anthems, while the accompanying booklet's striking photographs of wrecked edifices decaying by California's shrinking Salton Sea impart the message that sooner or later all human effort will be reduced to splinters and dust. What does all of that have to do with the hour of non-idiomatic improvisation preserved upon this disc? More than you might think. The textual message to do something and do it now contrasts with images of the impermanence of human endeavor to create a context that makes this hermetic music approachable by suggesting that all concern for history is vanity; only the presence counts.

Each member of this trio has proved his mettle in time-based settings, Wooley with Stephen Gauci's groups, and Lonberg-Holm and Roebke in the Valentine Trio. But here they embrace the immediacy of free improvisation, making music that refers to nothing outside of the interactions between the players and seems more keyed to the impact of sound rather than its strategic development. From the first downward swoop of strangled brass through thicket of rustling, woody resonance, the players are focused on each other, downplaying their respective technical gifts in order to make the music work.

Wooley's lexicon of squelchy kisses, disconsolate cries and curved, muted contours is the antithesis of flash, but it exemplifies a higher musicality by complementing the strings' creak and rumble. Roebke is likewise attentive to economy and collective impact. While Lonberg-Holm can play that game as well, his cello's train of electronic effects provides a contrasting voice that lends vividness whenever it sounds. The music attains such a peak on "Southern Ends Of The Earth," where Roebke's plucking zigs while the trumpet's tart utterances zag and both are illuminated by the bursts of sparking heat and color issuing from the cellist's plugged-in signal path.

—Bill Meyer

Throw Down Your Hammer And Sing: Tacones Altos; Sans Aluminumus; Southern Ends Of The Earth; Saint Mary; Anywhere, Anyplace At All. (60:05)

Personnel: Nate Wooley, trumpet; Fred Lonberg-Holm, cello, electronics; Jason Roebke, bass.

» Ordering info: porterrecords.com

Trio 3 + Geri Allen

At This Time

INTAKT 162

★★★★

There's never been any doubting the remarkable talents of pianist Geri Allen, but over the decades she's only occasionally realized her vast potential when she's leading her own band. Indeed, many of her finest recordings have found her either in a collective setting, such as her brilliant work with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian, or as a sideman, such as with Ornette Coleman. So it's no surprise that she's at her best serving as a guest for Trio 3—the powerhouse combo of drummer



Andrew Cyrille, reedist Oliver Lake and bassist Reggie Workman.

Allen has worked with all three members, so she fits right in on a typically sharp, probing program that dissolves lines between post-bop and free jazz. The album opens with her "Swamini," a gorgeously meditative homage to Alice Coltrane that has Lake masterfully evoking John. She swings jaggedly on a biting reading of Eric Dolphy's "Gazzeloni" and on the shuffling "Lake's Jump," a Curtis Clark piece with a sly "Night In Tunisia" quote on the turnaround of

the opening theme. But Allen has no problem with abstraction either, dropping dissonant runs and inside the piano clanking on the freely improvised "For Patrick L.," and using the rustling of sheet music as a device on "Long Melody."

—Peter Margasak

At This Time: Swamini; Gazzeloni; For Patrick L.; All Net; Current; Lake's Jump; Long Melody; Tey; Barbara's Rainbow; In The Realm ... Of The Child ... Of True Humanity Within. (60:59)
Personnel: Andrew Cyrille, drums; Reggie Workman, bass; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone, flute; Geri Allen, piano.

» Ordering info: intaktrec.ch

Gerald Clayton

Two-Shade

ARTISTSHARE 0088

★★★★½

Two-Shade, the strikingly confident, decidedly fresh debut album from Gerald Clayton, is imbued with a chamber jazz feel, in terms of the warm, intimate way that he connects with his regular trio mates, bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Justin Brown. That doesn't imply reserve or politeness, though, as zigzagging rhythms, criss-crossing lines, unexpected twists and other surprising patterns fill these dozen tunes—10 of Clayton's originals and two standards.

For the latter, the pianist, son of bassist John Clayton, goes it alone on a limber version of Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" and smartly navigates the speedy swing and intricate moving parts of an unusual arrangement of Cole Porter's "All Of You." Opening track "Boogablues," aptly titled, does a start-stop dance before comfortably slipping into Crescent City rhythms and eventually opening up for Sanders' woody solo runs. Leapfrogging figures are strewn about in "Trapped In Dream," one of several pieces influenced by classical composers.

Appealing grooves abound throughout, including on the gospel- and soul-informed "Love All Around," the genteel, Latin-tinged "Sunny Day Go" and the laid-back, bluesy "Two Heads One Pillow," which gives the leader the opportunity to stretch out and use his soloing to tell a story. It's just one of many musical tales related, with the help of artfully constructed arrangements, by a pianist successfully staking his claim as a rising star.

—Philip Booth

Two-Shade: Boogablues; Trapped In Dream; Two Heads One Pillow; Peace For The Moment; All Of You; Love All Around; Casiotone Pothole; One Two You; Sunny Day Go; Scrimmage; You're Out; Con Alma. (68:42)

Personnel: Gerald Clayton, piano; Joe Sanders, bass; Justin Brown, drums

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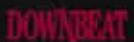
Chicago Jazz Orchestra

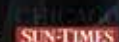
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Albert Mangelsdorff's Multiphonic Trombone Solo On 'Morbidia'

One of the leaders of the European jazz scene from the mid '50s until his death in 2005, Albert Mangelsdorff was a true innovator on the trombone. He took the technique of multiphonics (introduced to him by Eje Thelin and Paul Rutherford in the late '60s) and made it his trademark. This enabled him to perform solo improvised trombone concerts, which he continued to do after his groundbreaking solo concert at the Munich Olympic games in 1972.

Multiphonics are achieved by the player singing into the trombone at the same time as they play another note that is buzzed with their lips. It is commonly used by didgeridoo players, and less commonly on other wind instruments. As with most advanced techniques, multiphonic performance requires some practice to gain control of the pitches and sounds produced. Because the waves of the notes both interact through the instrument, the resulting sound is rich with harmonic overtones, creating a characteristic gruff and otherworldly timbre.

Mangelsdorff's solo on "Morbidia" from the 1990 solo trombone album *Purity* alternates motivic phrases in various clear intervals with free single-note lines played in the usual manner. Although he occasionally used the plunger mute to aid blending the sung and played sounds, on this track Mangelsdorff plays open horn. The upper part (notated with diamond noteheads, stems up) is the falsetto voice part; all other notes are played conventionally. The opening phrase (bar 1–2) is used extensively throughout as the main motif, and its stepwise dovetailing movement shows the inter-dependent counterlines that Mangelsdorff was working towards.

As a soloist, Mangelsdorff developed his materials in an economic way, giving the listener a sense of familiarity and adventure at the same time. For example, most of the single note "response" lines are similar scalar ascending passages leading into the upper reaches of the trombone. This is like the phrasing of flugelhorn player (and sometimes cohort) Kenny Wheeler. The idea in bar 12 is developed in bars 31 and 33, and contributes to a wavelike melodic contour for the solo. Several times the last played note in a run is the next sung note in a multiphonic chord, making it easier to pitch. In order to produce the specific sound he wants, Mangelsdorff varies the dynamics subtly throughout to bring out various under/overtone. On much of his recorded output, Mangelsdorff used patterns of set intervals, and this is demonstrated in the use of fourths in bars 21–23. A nice slowing



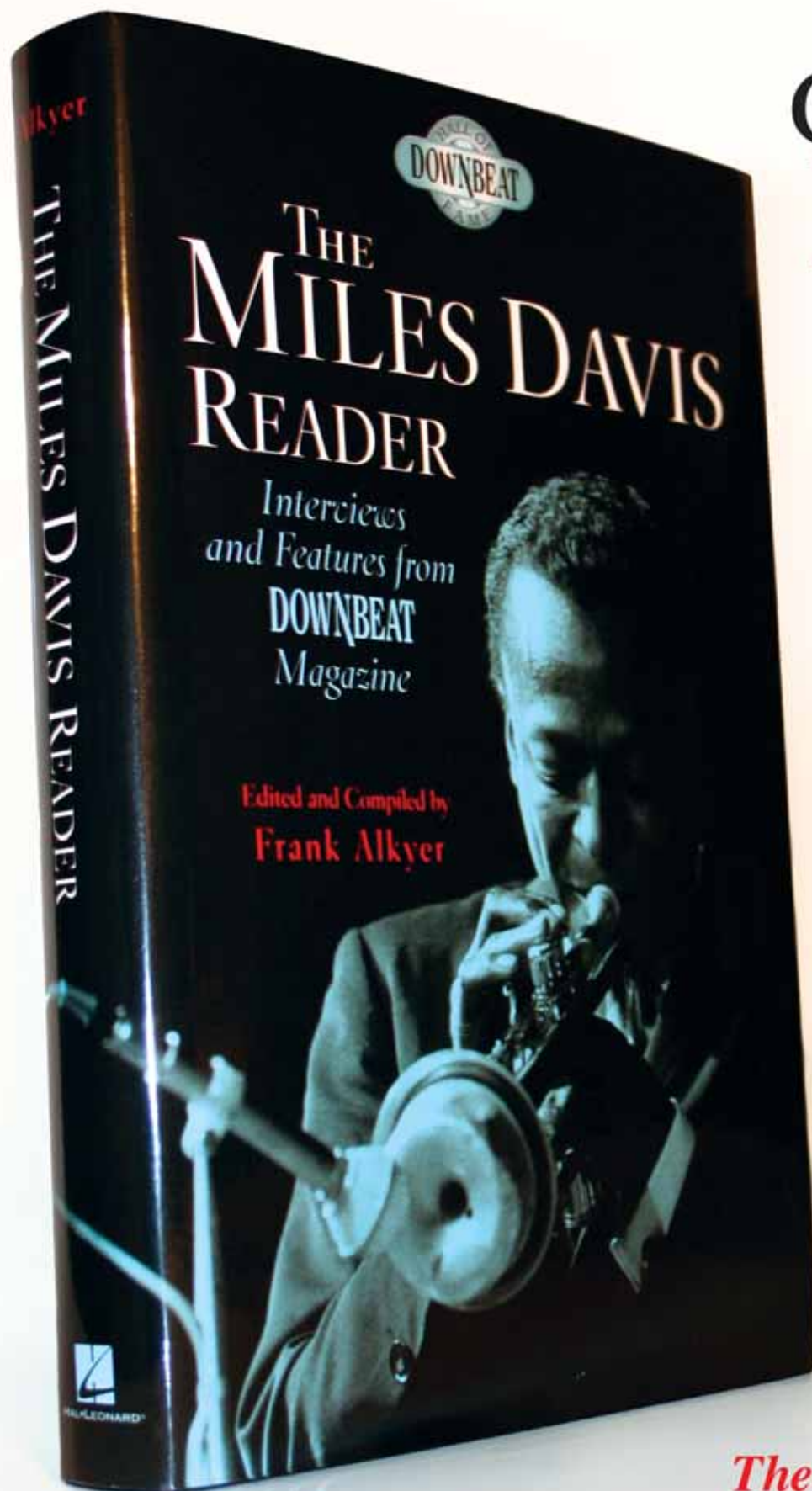
Albert Mangelsdorff

JOHN BOON

down effect is created in bar 18 through use of small to larger subdivisions of the beat while the pulse is still felt, showing Mangelsdorff's fluid rhythmic concept.

DB

Nick van Dijk is a brass player and jazz educator at the New Zealand School of Music and is currently writing a book on multiphonic technique.



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Michigan State's Hands-On Program Builds Community of Opportunity

No one will ever confuse East Lansing, Mich., with New York. But as a training ground for young musicians, Michigan State University's jazz studies program has been building itself as a formidable alternative, especially in terms of opportunities it provides. Recent faculty hires have also improved the student-to-teacher ratio.

"Everybody gets an opportunity to play," said bassist Rodney Whitaker, who directs the program. "We've had kids that come to us whose skills are minimal, but when they leave they can play. And you wouldn't get that in New York, where at most institutions, unless you can already play, they won't let you in."

To emphasize this aspect, the program presents combo classes and jam sessions at restaurants and cafes throughout the area. These sessions feature faculty members and visiting artists, who serve weeklong residencies several times a year. Bell's Pizzeria in East Lansing serves as the primary venue for these classes and informal performances. The program also has hosted events at Oodles of Noodles, Green River Cafe and Gumbo & Jazz, all which are located in the city. The exchanges also build a sense of community between the school's music program and the town.

In addition, the program's 20-piece jazz orchestra goes on yearly bus tours around Michigan, and has performed in Japan and at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York. A six-day Jazz Spectacular festival features a handful of high-profile artists and culminates with the regional edition of Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington. The performers have included Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Kenny Barron, Mulgrew Miller, Esperanza Spalding and Sean Jones.

Michigan State's teacher-to-student ratio is eight full-time instructors for an enrollment of

roughly 65 students. Along with Whitaker, the faculty includes alto player Wessell Anderson, drummer Randy Gillespie and trumpeter Etienne Charles, who was hired in August.

The faculty encourages students to work professionally and Whitaker clarifies that this doesn't mean the instructors and students step on each other for area restaurant and wedding gigs.

"As a student in a prominent program, you're competing with the faculty for local gigs," Whitaker said. "But we made a commitment to give all the gigs to the kids. If we do a local gig, we hire students to play with us."

Whitaker also includes a wide range of genres within the jazz program, which, along with the hands-on experience, has attracted students.

"I'm not completely a jazz player, I'm actually a classical performer, too," said junior Kevin Bene, an alto saxophonist from Bridgewater, N.J. "So what brought me to Michigan State was the fact that it's so well-rounded for saxophone."

"For me, it's an easier lifestyle," added graduate student Michael Doyle, a tenor player who turns 42 in January. "Yet the thing I like about the program is that you're going to be constantly challenged by the faculty."

Whitaker's experiences as a young musician growing up in Detroit serve as a template. He learned to adapt to different music styles and ensembles, many of which were steeped in pop music—which is why his curriculum includes pop, free jazz and gospel, as well as hard bop and straight-ahead jazz.

"Everything is not Ellington anymore," Whitaker said. "You've got to have one foot in the future and one foot in the past. Sometimes you're going to have to play music from the popular canon, so you have to be open to all styles of music. You have to play for the audience."

—Eric Fine

School Notes



Fox @ MIT: Pianist Donal Fox has been named a Martin Luther King visiting artist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the 2009–2010 academic year. Fox will teach musical improvisation in the school's music and theater arts section. The course will study improvisation techniques in solo and ensemble contexts and examine relationships between improvisation, composition and performance from a score. **Details:** mit.edu

Berklee's Montreux Master: Aubrey Logan, a trombone student, won the Shure-Montreux Voice Competition at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland on July 14. **Details:** berklee.edu

Reed Workshop: Singer Ed Reed is offering a series of vocal workshops through the Jazzschool in Berkeley, Calif., to a limited number of students. The first workshop is Nov. 15. **Details:** jazzschool.com

'Chops' Doc: Bruce Broder's documentary, *Chops*, has been released on DVD. The film follows high school jazz students from around the United States as they prepare for and perform in the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York. **Details:** chopsthemovie.com

Contos Appointed: Paul Contos was appointed director of the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars on Sept. 8. Contos is also a faculty member of University of California–Santa Cruz and Cal State University, Monterey Bay. **Details:** sfjazz.org

Vermont Sign-Up: Preregistration is now open for the July 25–July 30, 2010, session at Jazz Vermont. **Details:** jazzcamp.com **DB**

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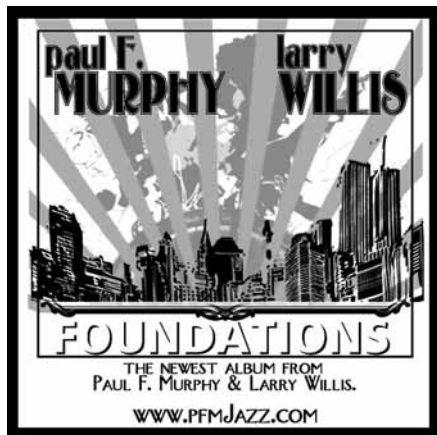
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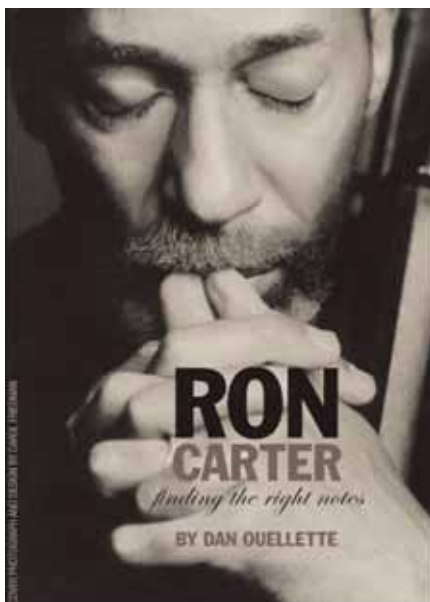
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SFJAZZ Collective

"Frontline" (from *Live 2008: 5th Annual Concert Tour*, SFJAZZ, 2008) Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Renee Rosnes, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Stefon Harris, vibraphone; Eric Harland drums.

The vibes made me think of Dave Holland's Big Band, but the bassist didn't sound like Dave. I liked the opening and closing sections, and the combined solos with the alto and tenor player, and then the trumpet and trombone. There were challenging things to catch in the arrangement and also metrically, but the drummer played this dense music with a nice feeling, relaxed and grooving, which is hard to do.

Jeff Watts

"Katrina James" (from *Watts*, Dark Key, 2009) Watts, drums; Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Terence Blanchard, trumpet; Christian McBride, bass.

That's based on a James Brown groove. They put it in 15! A nice metric modulation thing in the middle, too. I thought of Christian McBride, because he sometimes does James Brown type things. The drummer was hitting a little harder than the James Brown style of drumming, and there was some reverberation.

Mike Clark

"Like That" (from *Blueprints In Jazz, Vol.1*, Talking House, 2008) Clark, drums; Christian McBride, bass; Patrice Rushen, piano; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone; Christian Scott, trumpet; Jed Levy, tenor saxophone.

I liked the feeling, but there are several well-played consecutive solos that are not distinguished or individualistic. I like how the drummer finessed the area between even eighth note and swing. The dryness of the cymbal and interaction between the hi-hat and snare drum reminded me of things that Jack DeJohnette plays. The alto player had a bluesy thing that reminded me of Gary Bartz, but I don't think it's Gary. I suspect these are younger players, but something about where the groove sat—even though he's interacting, it's laid-back, not in your face—makes me think that the drummer isn't young.

Blue Note 7

"Mosaic" (from *Mosaic*, Blue Note, 2009) Lewis Nash, drums; Bill Charlap, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Steve Wilson, alto saxophone; Nicholas Payton, trumpet; Ravi Coltrane, tenor saxophone; Peter Bernstein, guitar.

The Blue Note 7 project. I enjoyed it, especially Nicholas on trumpet and Peter on guitar. They have a warm, lyrical solo concept. The bass and drum playing was exceptionally good. I think Lewis uses two toms. Only a few people can play swing time on that level—the interaction was happening, and the balance of the drumset and the ride cymbal sound ... all high quality and swinging.

Francisco Mela

"Channel 2" (from *Cirio: Live At The Blue Note*, Half Note, 2008) Mela, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Larry Grenadier, bass.

Those are my friends, Mark Turner, Jeff Ballard and Larry Grenadier, collectively known as Fly. Oh, not the whole group? I liked it. There was some composition, but mostly it was a springboard for improvising. The drumming was excellent—lots of sounds from the drums and cymbals, a groove that Jeff usually tears up. I'm curious which musician isn't in Fly. (after) Mela's playing doesn't strike me as overtly Cuban, although I'm sure it's all in there.



Ignacio Berroa

"Matrix" (from *Codes*, Blue Note, 2006) Berroa, drums; Gonzalo Rubalcaba, synthesizers; Edward Simon, piano; John Patitucci, acoustic bass; Armando Gola, electric bass; David Sanchez, tenor saxophone.

Chick Corea's "Matrix." The pianist soloed in a style similar to Chick, but I don't think it's Chick. The switch from acoustic to electric bass reminds me of John Patitucci. It's a slick arrangement, well-played, though I can't say it grabbed me. The swing section went for a Roy Haynes feeling, which was cool, but it wasn't Roy. I think only someone much younger would play the 6/8 groove. The drum sound was fusiony, a 22-inch bass drum with pillows or something in it, more funk-sounding as opposed to a super-crispy snare drum and thuddy toms—not that that's a bad thing.

John Zorn

"Ravayah" (from *Masada-7*, Tzadik, 2004) John Zorn, alto saxophone; Dave Douglas, trumpet; Greg Cohen, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

Mostly a springboard for the drummer, which is good with a good drummer, as in this case. They played a lot of different, interesting ideas over that 7/4 vamp. I liked the drum sound, with those Tony Williams references. The trumpet player had a Don Cherry quality. It's very good. (after) Joey is an extremely versatile drummer who could play any gig, but he's chosen not to be a jack-of-all-trades.

Kendrick Scott

"View From Above" (from *The Oracle*, World Culture 2007) Scott, drums; Seamus Blake, tenor saxophone; Myron Walden, alto saxophone; Aaron Parks, piano; Mike Moreno, guitar; Derrick Hodges, bass.

It reminds me of Kendrick Scott. That's Seamus Blake on tenor saxophone. Is Lage Lund playing guitar? I liked the composition, the collective feeling, the space, and that Kendrick moved the music forward with drum fills that were complex but well-timed in a way that didn't step on the music. **DB**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.



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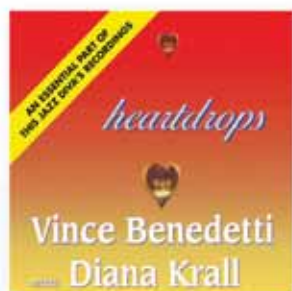
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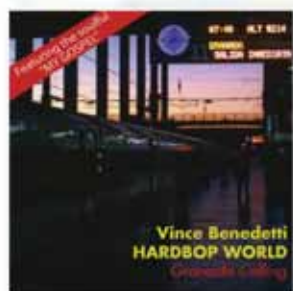
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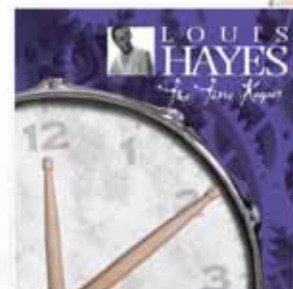
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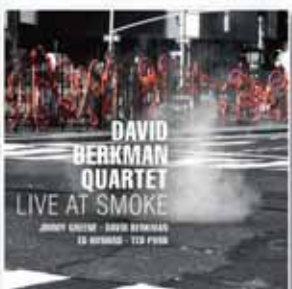
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